LOUIS XIV
IN LOVE & IN WAR

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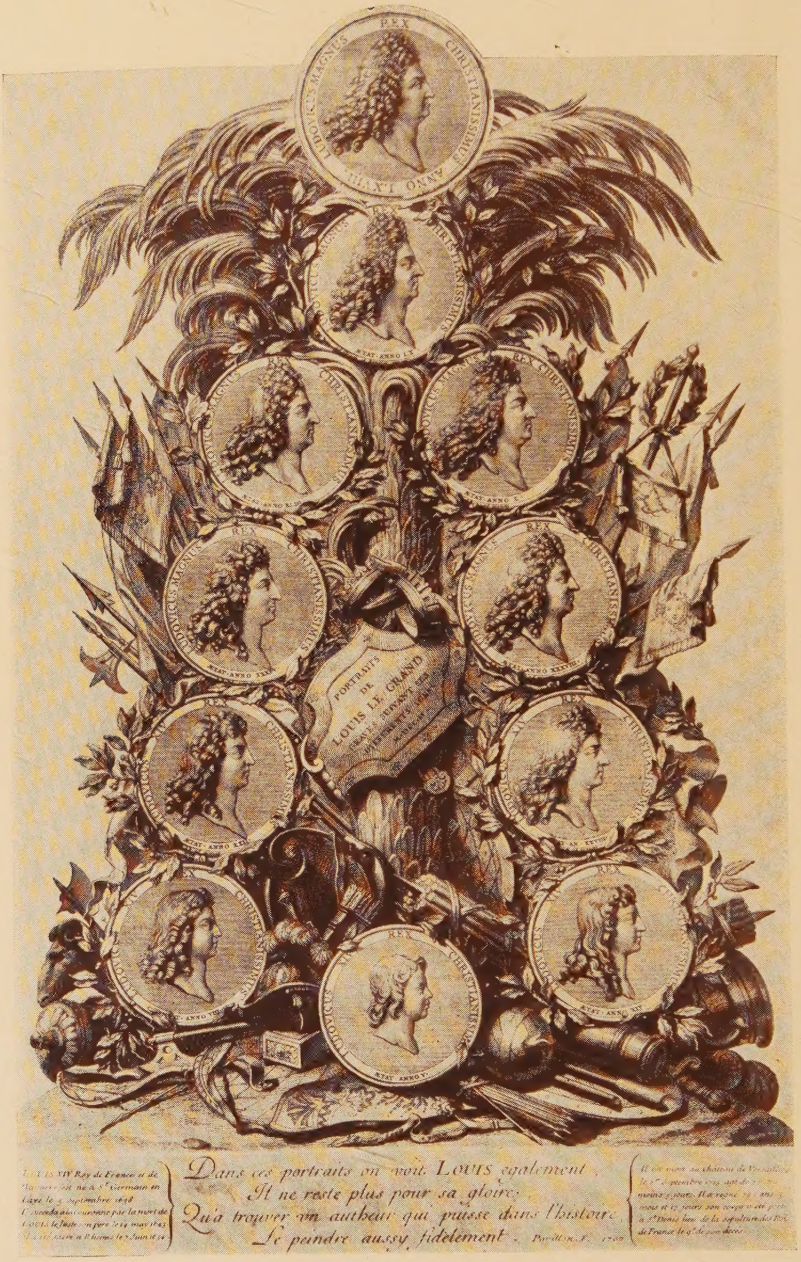
PORTRAITS
DE
LOUIS LE GRAND
Dans ces portraits on voit LOUIS également
Il ne reste plus pour sa gloire
Qu'à trouver un autheur qui puisse dans l'histoire
Le peindre aussy fidelement

PORTRAITS OF LOUIS AT DIFFERENT AGES

LOUIS XIV
IN LOVE & IN WAR

BY

SISLEY HUDDLESTON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
New York and London

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LOUIS XIV
IN LOVE & IN WAR

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To Dr. Alfred Adler,

whose researches into the springs of human conduct, whose revelations of the causes and consequences of what he has called the "inferiority complex," have made possible this book, which endeavours to give not only a narrative of the amatory, political, and military experiences of Louis the Sun-King, but to indicate the psychological reasons of his transformation from a dull oppressed boy into a resplendent monarch, defying Europe yet secretly suffering from incurable misgivings, do I respectfully wish to express my gratitude and esteem.

Saint-Pierre d'Autils (Eure) S. H.
March 1929

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Louis XIV

IN LOVE & IN WAR

Chapter Onē

GOD-GIVEN

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1638, Anne of Austria, Queen of France, belatedly gave an heir to the king, Louis XIII. Precisely at eleven in the morning there was ushered into the world, with elaborate medical, ecclesiastical, and courtly ceremony, in the presence of a crowd of princes, bishops, nobles, and common folk, privileged to gloat over the pangs of the royal mother, a whining infant who was hailed as God-Given. This miraculous child was indeed to have a remarkable destiny, to climb to the topmost peak of power from whence he could scornfully survey the potentates of Europe on their lowlier peaks. But his strength was built on weakness, on his intimate consciousness of weakness. Louis the Fourteenth would never have been such a great king (and the history of Europe would therefore have been inconceivably different), had not the boy born in that thronged chamber been shamefully treated for years, the most impressionable years of adolescence. His misery was the well-manured soil in which grew his glory. His majesty

sprang from his meanness. His incredible ambitions could come only from his sense of impotence. His extraordinary mastery was the manifestation of a haunting fear of failure.

Modern psychology has given us the key to the character of Louis. In the case of Louis historians either praise or blame: in recent publications there have been ridiculously extravagant eulogies and equally excessive diatribes. The truth is simpler. Louis is neither big nor little. He is a perfect specimen of mediocrity, but of mediocrity placed on the highest pedestal. He became what he became by the interaction of clearly perceptible forces.

There is perhaps no more fascinating study than that of his life; for if we examine it closely we shall see, on a vastly magnified scale, the curious workings of human nature, paradoxical in appearance, but commonplace in experience. We shall see—and it is amazing that nobody has ever pointed out such an obvious truth—that Louis secretly suffered all his life from his juvenile inferiority. We are all more or less distressed by our concealed feeling of futility, of inadequacy; but when the feeling is as deep-rooted as it was in the soul of Louis, when the theatre of action is not a home or an office but a continent, then the result is the triumph of Absolute Monarchy, the splendour of Versailles, a series of devastating wars of magnificence which gave to France her general contour

and to Europe diplomatic traditions which are valid and vital today.

Strange is it to reflect that it was because Louis was, for twenty years, kept down, that eventually he rose so high. Those years of oppression and suppression coloured everything. He never forgot them. They moulded his thoughts, his desires, his actions. It is upon them that at the outset I would insist, for they are all-important. The more curious is it that they are usually passed lightly over.

Had Louis not been continually humiliated as a boy, had he not been taught by his mentors and by circumstances to distrust himself, he would not have experienced a positively morbid need of self-assertion, he would not have demanded, to buttress himself in his own esteem, perpetual fulsome laudations, he would not have determined, to fortify his developing good opinion of himself which eventually fell over into fatuity, that he should make himself supreme in Europe—that is to say, in the whole world of the seventeenth century. Mazarin and his mother, on the one hand, and the Fronde, on the other hand, worked to ends of which they did not dream.

Here is the value of a comprehending survey of the life of Louis, a value at once psychological and historical. When so much has been written of him, why has this central point been overlooked? Why has it, even as I express it now, the air of novelty? There

has been much speculation on the sudden transformation of Louis, from a dull awkward bashful boy, into a resplendent monarch, dismissing his ministers, brooking no aristocratic rivalry, challenging emperor, kings and pope, dictating his commands with superb assurance to everybody—except his womenfolk who, with feminine intuition, discovered the oppressed boy under the mask of the resplendent monarch, and tyrannized over the despot. But surely the so-called mystery is crystal-clear; and the man is the natural outgrowth of the boy. The release from galling restraints was sudden and Louis had to choose, once and for all, whether he would consent to be a minister-ridden king like his father or would assume real authority. In choosing real authority he plunged into excess—he had to plunge into excess to justify his choice to himself as well as to others. He shone as the Sun-King, and even, as his flatterers declared, and as he tried to believe, as the Sun-God, the reincarnation or transfiguration of Apollo. Action and reaction are equal: and Louis the hunted out-of-elbows boy-king was the apprentice of Louis le Roi-Soleil. Yet under the cloth of gold, under the garments of glory, under the mantle woven of many conquests, gnawed always, gnawed remorselessly, the memory of an evil youth. That we would do well to bear in mind as we stand in the crowded bedchamber where a woman is in labour of a man-child.

For twenty-two years Anne of Austria had been married to Louis XIII of France. Their union seemed doomed to sterility. Many hopes, many intrigues, had been founded upon the royal unfruitfulness. The Queen, though she is credited with many lovers, including the gallant Buckingham, was not ingenious enough to act upon the Papal advice to her illustrious predecessor, Catherine de' Medici. "A girl of spirit," said Clement VII slyly, "will never lack children." *A figlia d'inganno non manca mai figliuolanza.* Yet Anne, neglecting all opportunities, kept the world waiting, and the conspirators, princely and diplomatic, considered the prospect of dynastic changes.

After the active Henri IV had come the effete Louis XIII, moody, indolent, indifferent to cares of state. For some years during his minority, the regency was in the hands of Marie de' Medici, his mother, and the powerful nobles had profited by the incapacity and wilfulness of Marie to undo most of the work of Henri IV. Marie favoured Concini, afterwards Maréchal d'Ancre, a servile and worthless Florentine who merely sought to enrich himself. France was often badly administered by foreigners. It is not surprising in these conditions that the great families should sell their submission—they had no loyalty to sell—dearly. Some of the grants which were made to them were incredible. The Condé family, for ex-

ample, was awarded pensions and endowments running into millions of livres. (The livre may be reckoned at about four gold francs.) It was this house of Condé, always ready to change sides, which, if Gaston, brother of the king, died, would presumably receive the inheritance of Louis XIII. After the assassination of Concini, and the overthrow of the queen-regent, the nobles continued their revolt, and royal authority was discredited. Albert de Luynes' government still further weakened and confused the country.

It was fortunate for France that Richelieu then took control. Of surpassing intelligence and of pitiless energy, he obtained complete ascendancy. One may say that there was no reign of Louis XIII; there was first the reign of Marie de' Medici and Concini and Albert de Luynes, and afterwards the reign of Richelieu. The cardinal redressed the feeble central authority. He sternly put the nobles in their place. No rank was too high to resist him. The godson of Henri IV, the first baron of the realm, the Duc de Montmorency, was beheaded because he had stirred up rebellion in the province of Languedoc. The offices of constable and admiral were abolished. Fortified castles were razed. Into the remote regions of France Richelieu sent his intendants who governed under his government. The Parliament, which claimed political rights, was reminded without amenity that its functions were purely judiciary. The

Protestants who were considered dangerous for the unity of the realm were subdued. The rule of Richelieu was brilliant: the cardinal established a single power in the state, he developed the army and navy, he obtained military victories which added Alsace, Roussillon, and Artois to French territory, he encouraged colonial expansion—notably in Canada and the Antilles—he employed men of letters for state purposes and recognized the press as a method of reaching public opinion.

Yet this able politician, this skilful diplomatist, this superior organizer, muddled the finances. Taxation became a dreadful burden. Want stalked abroad. The distress of the people did not move him. He piled up debts and prepared the way for those difficulties which might well have brought the French monarchy to the dust in the early days of Louis XIV had there been a competent and disinterested leader imbued with such ideals as eventually—nearly one hundred and fifty years later—brought about the French Revolution. Historical causes are sometimes long in producing their consequences. Henri IV had paternally wished that every peasant could put a chicken in his pot. Richelieu cynically thought of the people as "mules who are spoiled by good feeding and ease."

The grandparents of Louis XIV were the valiant Henri IV and the irresolute, capricious Marie de' Medici; while on the maternal side were Philip III

of Spain and Margaret of Austria. In his veins flowed Bourbon, Medici, and Spanish and Austrian Hapsburg blood. When the time came to unite Louis XIII and Anne of Austria—this was in 1615, when the royal pair were only thirteen years of age—the whole of Europe was deeply concerned with the potential offspring. Papal diplomacy was particularly interested in the event since French Protestantism was still regarded as a menace to the Catholic Church. The consummation of the marriage was, then, extremely important. Until there was evidence of such consummation it was not binding. Therefore, evidence was duly forthcoming from the intimate servants of these children on the day which followed the wedding. One may properly be sceptical, for many years passed without fruition, and the subsequent behaviour of the boy shows that he was not at all impressed by the charms of the girl who had been given him as playmate.

Seven years later, it is true, Anne of Austria had a miscarriage, but the sullen Louis continued to hunt a little, make war a little, and neglect his wife. Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, the restless younger brother of the king, as the prospective heir, led an opposition party and provided a political alternative. That was not displeasing to Richelieu. An astute statesman can always find advantages in division.

Meanwhile there were whispers about the deserted

ANNE D'AUTRICHE, FROM THE PORTRAIT BY P. DE CHAMPAIGNE

Anne. Her pride was hurt at her abandonment by the king, and seeking consolation, she was always susceptible to the flattery of a handsome courtier. Buckingham wooed her publicly, and other would-be lovers came and went. The whispers are doubtless justified, but there is nothing tangible on which the historian can build a case against the legitimacy of the belated dauphin.

Certainly the child was ardently desired. There is in Normandy a little spa—perhaps the oldest of its kind in France: extraordinary fertilizing qualities are attributed to the waters of Forges-les-Eaux. Eighteen years after the disappointing marriage, the doctors advised a visit to the tiny town; and with great pomp and ceremony Louis XIII, Anne of Austria, and Richelieu proceeded to the springs. Nothing happened. The royal pair seemed irrevocably separated. But Richelieu did not despair. He had long known that the queen, a foreigner on the throne of France, had maintained communications with her relatives who were always the potential enemies of France. She wrote to her brother, the king of Spain, she wrote to her cousin, the regent of the Netherlands, she kept up correspondence with the Duc de Lorraine. Her compromising epistles constituted a weapon for Richelieu, who in conversation with her hinted at their existence. The cardinal contrived to reconcile the estranged couple—Louis by persuasion, Anne by fear.

They met at Saint-Maur, and lived at the Louvre for the Christmas festivities. The circumstance, occurring at the proper date, serves to strengthen the contention that, in spite of matrimonial vicissitudes and extra-conjugal relations, Louis XIV was a true Bourbon.

Nevertheless there is a mystery. Why after twenty-two years? If not before, why then? Michelet reminds us that Mazarin was presented to the queen by Richelieu as "resembling Buckingham"—a cryptic remark—but he concludes that Louis was unquestionably a Frenchman, while his brother Philippe, later to be known as the Duc d'Anjou, and on the death of Gaston, as the Duc d'Orléans, who was born two years later, was as unmistakably Italian.

God-Given they called the young Louis—Louis Dieu-Donné. In that royal bedchamber of Saint-Germain where Anne of Austria suffered the pains of gestation, were interested spectators, for in the lives of kings and queens under the ancien régime nothing was private. The queen as a human being, with ordinary reticencies, with instinctive intimacies, did not exist. There existed only a machine for the procreation of an heir to the throne; and the operation had to be watched to prevent all possibility of deception. In the bedchamber and in the antechamber were ranged the dignitaries of the state, noble and ecclesiastical, in accordance with the privileges of their rank, and in

the palace and grounds were motley throngs; while in virtue of his profession an astrologer, hidden in the wardrobe, was present to record the exact minute of the delivery, and to cast the horoscope of the infant.

There was Louis XIII, pleased and proud; Gaston, vexed and incredulous; the bishops of Lisieux, Meaux, and Beauvais, pronouncing mass at an improvised altar by the bedside; the Condés, and others, who had good reason to denounce any attempt at substitution, any feat of prestidigitation between the curtains. Doubtless Louis was veritably born of Anne of Austria; and doubtless the theory that the Man in the Iron Mask, who languished some years later in French prisons, was a twin brother of Louis has long been exploded.

Chapter Two

THE RED DAWN OF A REIGN

IN A few years this God-Given child was to be king—at least in name—of a France which stood precariously in a hostile Europe. Let us glance, then, at the general situation in Western Europe. There were, on the Continent, two great powers, besides France: Spain and the Empire. The ruling house of Austria traditionally supplied the emperor. That emperor was elected by the various Germanic principalities, but in fact the office had become almost hereditary in the Hapsburgs. Moreover, the closest family ties bound Spain with Austria; and the Austrian and Spanish Hapsburgs should thus have been in supreme command. Spain was declining but was still powerful. The Empire was increasing in strength, but the federation was extremely loose, and one of the chief aims of France then and for several centuries was to prevent the unity of the Germanic peoples. Seventeenth century Germany was not Germany at all, but was what France called the Germanies, namely, a conglomeration of over three hundred and fifty states which dif-

fered vastly from each other in size and character. Some of them were governed by kings, dukes, or earls; others by archbishops, bishops, or abbots; there were cities, such as Frankfort and Nuremberg, which claimed independence; there were even knights who owned a castle and a village, supreme in their own domains. The emperor was elected by important vassals, and among the electors were the ecclesiastical potentates on the Rhine at Mayence, Trèves, and Cologne. To the south was the region of the Elector of the Palatinate. To the north-east were the electorates of Saxony and Brandenburg—the Elector of Brandenburg afterwards becoming King of Prussia, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Emperor of Germany. Then there was the King of Bohemia; there were other rulers in Württemberg, Hesse, and Baden; there were the imperial cities: altogether an inextricable tangle of states.

It was in the early part of the sixteenth century that the greater part of Western Europe came under the control of the Emperor Charles-Quint (Charles V). He had inherited Burgundy, Spain, portions of Italy, the Austrian territories, and in 1519 was chosen as emperor. Since Charlemagne there had been no such dominion in Europe. When Charles-Quint laid down the cares of government in the middle of the sixteenth century, he gave to his brother, Ferdinand, who had acquired by marriage the kingdoms of Bohemia and

Hungary, the whole of the German possessions of the Hapsburgs, and to his son he gave Spain, the American colonies, the important Italian possessions, and the Netherlands.

France, which had not yet acquired her definitive frontiers, but was relatively homogeneous, and was conscious of her nationhood, strove not only to keep the Germanic states apart, but was deeply concerned lest Spain and the Empire should again be wedded. They had been divided in the succession of Charles-Quint: it would be an evil day for France if they should come together. In the reign of Louis XIV they were all but joined, and one of the most desperate wars, which nearly ruined France, overclouded the latter days of Louis.

Spain reached its heyday in the time of Philip II. It was in the sixteenth century one of the greatest empires the world had ever seen. Philip ruled over Spain and Portugal, and the Netherlands on either side of the Rhine, over the Franche-Comté, the Roussillon, the Milanese, the two Sicilies, while Tuscany and Parma and other Italian states were completely dependent upon him. Outside Europe the Spanish king held the Philippines, and the settlements which the Portuguese had made on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, in the Peninsula of Malacca, and in the spice-islands of the Eastern Archipelago. In America the Spanish possessions were immense, extending, as

Macaulay remarks, on each side of the equator into the temperate zone. Napoleon at the beginning of the nineteenth century had no such sway, for Napoleon never had sea-power. Spain was rich, with ships, colonies, commerce, and was a difficult enemy for France, since she held not only the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Italian states, but also the north-eastern frontier which has always been hard to defend. Spain was now falling into decay, and had lost Holland, but she was formidable.

These two powers—Germany and Spain—were supreme in Europe. But the Netherlands, especially Holland, had become largely Protestant. They had looked upon the King of Spain as a cruel foreigner. Well they might. Spanish tyranny was unsparing, and the measures taken against the heretics by the Inquisition were bound to result in a revolt as soon as a leader could be found. That leader was William the Silent, Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau. The United Provinces, north of the mouths of the Rhine and Scheldt, declared themselves independent. Spain, which was becoming impoverished, refused to acknowledge their independence, until she was compelled to do so in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia.

England, detached from the Continent, yet geographically unable to escape altogether from the Continental system, was, as she showed in the years with which our story deals, the natural arbiter of Conti-

nental quarrels. She had beaten the Spanish Armada. She had become the mistress of the seas: her greatest interest in the wars which were soon to open was to keep any power from becoming so strong and tranquil as to afford time and money and men to menace her.

France had her problem of Calvinism, with which Richelieu dealt firmly. There had been a long and disastrous war. But much as Richelieu disliked the Huguenots he disliked the Hapsburgs still more. France was shut in by the lands of the Hapsburgs, Spanish and Austrian; she wanted Roussillon in order to make the Pyrenees her frontier with Spain. She wanted Franche-Comté and various fortified towns on the Rhine, in order to have some protection against invasion from the Spanish Netherlands. In the Thirty Years' War, on German territory, fought out between Catholics and Protestants (1618 to 1648) Richelieu dexterously intervened, setting aside his religious predilections. He helped the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus. He cleverly manœuvred against Spain, and in May, 1635, formally declared war on her. With the United Provinces he concluded an alliance, while Sweden agreed not to negotiate peace without France. So we find the French cardinal aiding and abetting heretics against orthodox Catholics.

Obviously he sought advantages for France—and obtained them in the actual occupation of Roussillon and Artois, Lorraine and Alsace, while French gen-

erals, Turenne and Condé in particular, delivered further blows at the ascendancy of the Hapsburgs. Had France succumbed, the Continent would have had the Hapsburgs for master. Happily France did not succumb, but found, by the skill of Richelieu, opportunities of profiting by the European confusion.

Political marriages did not greatly alter the course of events. Louis XIII had espoused Anne of Austria, a Spanish princess, but this marriage, which seemed to reverse the policy of Henri IV, the father of Louis XIII, could not maintain peace between antagonists who sometimes fought on trivial pretexts but who were in reality engaged in a life-and-death struggle. Whether France would survive or be dismembered by the Empire and Spain—that was the real issue of these days. These perplexing problems of Europe the boy Louis XIV was nominally called upon to solve when he was less than five years old.

In life and death Louis XIII and Richelieu were inseparable. The cardinal died on December 7, 1642, and the king followed him to the grave on May 14, 1643.

When the cardinal was dying he would not be put off with complacent phrases. "Tell me the truth," he asked his doctor. "Monseigneur," replied the doctor, "you will either be dead or better tomorrow." "That is the way to talk," said Richelieu, and he called for the curé of Saint-Eustache. "I shall soon appear

before my Judge," he said, "and I hope he will condemn me if I have striven for anything but the good of religion and the state." We may have doubts about his religion. When he wanted allies he did not care whether they were Protestants or Catholics. But that he had a single mind for the state can hardly be doubted. "Do you pardon your enemies?" asked the priest, presenting the Host; and again the dying cardinal answered: "I have never had enemies save those of the state."

The king was an unconscionable time in dying. He lingered for six weeks. In everything he hesitated. In everything he was late. The state christening of his son was celebrated during his illness. The little lad when asked his name replied, "I am Louis XIV." "Not yet, not yet, my son," murmured the king, "but you will be soon if it be the will of God."

The trumpeters at Saint-Germain proclaimed the accession of Louis XIV to the throne. He was not yet five years of age. It is said that the boy behaved with precocious dignity on this occasion, but we must be permitted to discount chronicles of courtiers. The customary homage was paid to him. But already two persons had decided to seize power for themselves. They were his mother, the sister of Philip IV of Spain, a Princess of Austria, and the red-robed Cardinal Mazarin who had hastened to attach himself to the queen-mother. The testament of Louis XIII was

clear. He did not desire that his wife should reign as regent with unlimited authority. A sovereign council was to be appointed.

Mazarin and the queen conspired to set aside the royal declaration, registered by Parliament, even before the king's death. At Saint-Germain and at Paris, guards were held in readiness. Troops were to occupy the halls of Parliament to prevent Monsieur, the Duc d'Orléans, from having himself proclaimed king. Four days later the queen and her party marched into Paris amid public rejoicings. A *lit de justice* was convoked. The will was annulled, the council was set aside, Anne of Austria was made regent—unfettered, except by her attachment to Mazarin. Orléans, a shiftless man always in opposition but always missing his opportunity, was placated by the empty title of Lieutenant-General of France.

The little king is shown to us in portraits which represent him as sweet and naïve and dull. His curly hair falls over the warrior's dress which he was already compelled to don. Or, again, the child is depicted with the regalia of the Order of the Saint-Esprit on a court dress of lace and ribbons and embroidered stuffs. Always has he his miniature sword. The baby is always the warrior. His reign was to be marked by many battles. It opened with the most surprising battle of the century.

As Louis XIV, flanked by his Austro-Spanish

mother and the Italian cardinal, entered Paris, there ran through France the glorious news of the French victory at Rocroi. The French are quickly stirred by military triumphs, and this was a military triumph almost without precedent in French annals—or so it seemed to the French of that day. Thus Louis began his kingly career. This was the red but brilliant dawn of the monarch who was to be known as the Sun-King —the Roi-Soleil. Something over half a century before, the might of Spain had been shattered on the seas. The Great Armada had broken itself on the British reefs, blown, as the British believed, by British winds in a huddle of destruction. It was for England a crowning mercy and the consecration of her sea-power. The battle of Rocroi has been compared to the wreck of the armada. That is an exaggeration. Spain could not be seriously hurt by a single defeat on land. Everybody who fought in the Thirty Years' War was defeated. Everybody saw the tide of battle flow and ebb; and in these long leisurely wars success was scarcely better than failure, and failure was often a kind of success. The significance of Rocroi, however, is real. It smashed the legend of Spanish invulnerability in the Netherlands, and it heralded a new era for France. History might have been different had it not been for the timely triumph of Rocroi. Never was a battle more opportunely won. The queen-regent, the red-clad cardinal, the infant king, might

easily have fallen had it not been for the apt sword of the Grand Condé. He was not, to be strictly accurate, yet called Condé, but he was beginning to be Grand. He was the Duc d'Enghien, the son of the Prince de Condé, and the heir to the title—a superb young man in the early twenties. It cannot be denied that he was dashing, and that he was in the phrase of Mazarin, "happy." Mazarin's test of everybody was his "happiness"—that is to say, his talent of success. "*Est-il heureux?*" always asked the cardinal in his abominable Italian accent.

Enghien was "happy"—or, as we should describe him, lucky—at Rocroi, and it was a happy chance for the trinity of the Louvre that he was happy. The queen in nursing her child had gained a bloody battle, and the child in being nursed was covered with laurels. As for Mazarin, he had previously sent word to the superb young man to observe the utmost caution in view of the dynastic crisis, and the superb young man had disregarded the instructions of Mazarin, and had recklessly thrown his troops against the invincible Spanish infantry. But Mazarin's instructions could conveniently be forgotten since Enghien had shattered the Spanish army. It was only proper to recall that Mazarin was the man who had picked out the superb young man, and had placed him at the head of the Netherland army a few months before.

France is sometimes regarded as sceptical, as posi-

tive, but Michelet truly says that France is always waiting for a miracle, always waiting for a human miracle—a hero. A successful general immediately becomes a hero. The hero falls from the sky. The people fall on their knees.

What, then, was Rocroi?

The battle took place on May 19, 1643. For a quarter of a century war had been waged intermittently without clear results. The Spanish, leaving Holland, had gathered their troops and had marched as though they intended to enter Picardy. They had turned, had pierced the Ardennes, and had camped around Rocroi. There they were, they imagined, perfectly safe. It was incredible that the French, whose king was dying, would attack them; moreover, they were surrounded by the oaks of the Ardennes. To arrive at Rocroi, on its low hill, it was necessary to pass in single file through narrow avenues of trees.

Yet the foolhardy French rode and marched through the forest and before the Spanish army was in line of battle the French were ready to fight. There was some cannonading, and the armies remained face to face throughout the night. With the dawn Enghien gaily passed before his troops, white plumes nodding on his helmet, and gave as battle-cry his own name—Enghien! The French cavalry beat the enemy on the left, the Spanish cavalry beat the French on the right. There was a moment when the battle

THE GRAND CONDÉ AT THE BATTLE OF ROCROI, FROM THE PAINTING IN THE GALERIE DES BATAILLES AT VERSAILLES

seemed lost. Desperate charges were of no avail. The French losses were terrible. The Spanish infantry stood solid. At last a breach was made in their ranks by long-range cannonading. The pride of Spain suddenly collapsed. The white plumes of Enghien, stained with blood, floated above the massacre. It was not merely that many thousands of the enemy were killed or taken prisoner: the capital fact was that the famous Spanish infantry had at last been utterly routed.

The situation of Mazarin was assured. The queen had hesitated. Could she make a foreigner her chief minister? She had a moment of tenderness for the Duc de Beaufort, son of the Duc de Vendôme, and grandson of Gabrielle d'Estrées and Henri IV. He was young, brave, and handsome, with long golden curls. He could talk volubly and gaily and sometimes employed a rude language which earned him his title of Roi des Halles—King of the Paris Markets. He had stood by her side when the crowd surged around the royal palace at the death of the king. But Beaufort was conquered by Madame de Montbazon and so he missed his chance. Gaston, the Duc d'Orléans, pitifully renounced his rights to the regency, as did Condé, father of Enghien. There were others who had to be removed from Mazarin's path; but by dint of setting one against the other, by the promise of favours, by judicious prodigalities, Mazarin, whom

the queen described as disinterested—though the penniless adventurer amassed a prodigious fortune in a few years—became the chief minister of the crown.

It was a remarkable feat of diplomacy; but had there not been jealousies and quarrels among the great ladies of the court—particularly between Madame de Longueville, sister of Enghien, and La Montbazon—he would probably not have succeeded. Mazarin, a new Concini, reigned.

In manner Mazarin was modest and insinuating. He was artistic, musical, unobtrusive, accomplished, and in his gentle voice conversed with the queen in her own language. His large black eyes in a pale face were cast to the ground. He showed a paternal interest in the young king, and was the devoted slave of the forty-year-old queen.

Paris rejoiced in the victory and tolerated Mazarin. Banners flew from every window. At the street corners barrels of wine were broached. In a golden coach the queen and the little king went to Notre-Dame, where the Te Deum was chanted. Flowers were strewn before them. Trumpets and cannon and joyous shouts hailed them—and Rocroi.

Puer triomphator—the triumphant child: this was the motto engraved on a medal which was struck by order of Mazarin. Another resounding battle—that was the food to give the people! So town after town and village after village along the Rhine were taken,

quite regardless of whether they could be held. For five years France did not protest, though the finances were collapsing and usurious loans mortgaged the proceeds of taxation and jeopardized the future of France. There was famine, but there was a new opera-house. There was ruin, but there was victory. There was misery, but there was glory. Mazarin was a great illusionist, and Condé was his assistant. Condé had his panache, and could be relied upon to win spring-time battles with a flourish of trumpets. Other generals recommended themselves only by their tenacity, their organizing ability, their military science. They could hold out during the winter. Condé was sent forward, in fair weather, at favourable moments, and at no matter what price he pressed home his attack.

An example of his tactics was given at Fribourg. He declined to make any attempt to turn the enemy by marching on its flank. He preferred to send his men against impregnable barricades where they perished. The enemy eventually drew off and posted themselves in a still stronger position. The French continued to batter themselves to pieces. Finally the enemy, lacking food, made a safe retreat. Such was the French victory of Fribourg. Yet the manner in which the French allowed themselves to be killed and eventually drove off the enemy had a fine moral effect.

But Mazarin was playing a dangerous game. The Condé family was providing him with victories but

was also placing him under obligations. Its rapacity increased. That house became more powerful than the royal house—it held Burgundy and Berri and Champagne and Normandy and other parts of France.

Napoleon has compared Turenne with Condé. Turenne was more methodical, more prudent, and when he showed audacity it was after ripe deliberation. His campaigns were as regular and logical as a classical play; while the battles of Condé were as lyrical and tumultuous as a romantic drama. The war went on in Germany, along the Danube, in Flanders, in Spain—where, before Lerida, Condé, opening the battle to the sound of violins, was badly beaten; in Italy, everywhere. Lens was won, despite a manœuvre of Condé that should have lost him the battle. Finally Turenne marched on Vienna, and it was decided to conclude the Treaty of Westphalia.

Undoubtedly Mazarin showed himself at his best in negotiating this treaty. It was concluded in 1648, though conferences had begun in the Westphalian towns, Münster and Osnabrück, in 1643. The map of Europe was redrawn. The Empire was given a new constitution. Austria which had tried to suppress religious and political liberty was obliged to concede rights to the Protestants. The emperor lost much of his authority, while the princes of Germany regained their sovereignty. For France the disunion of Germany had become the principal objective and the

doctrine was consecrated in this treaty. Sweden received important indemnities. Switzerland secured her independence. France occupied Lorraine, though promising to restore it to the duke; and insisted on the renunciation of imperial rights in the bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, in the town of Pignerol, in Alsace (with the exception of Strasbourg) and thus was the free navigation on the Rhine guaranteed. France obtained a footing beyond the Rhine, in Breisach and Philippsburg. She could intrigue among the hundreds of German states, each of which was permitted to have a foreign policy of its own. The unification of Germany was delayed for hundreds of years. On the other hand, the Elector of Brandenburg became the most powerful of the German princes, and gradually, in the course of centuries, brought about the German unity which the Austrian emperor had failed to establish.

These were remarkable results. Mazarin was reproached because he, a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, had for the sake of keeping the Empire divided, a republic of princes without a real head, admitted the principle of religious liberty, and so favoured the Lutherans—"as though he were a Turk or a Saracen disguised as a priest"—and because Spain was allowed to withdraw from the conference, biding her time to take her revenge.

Chapter Three

REVOLUTIONARY RUMBLINGS

THE boyhood of Louis XIV was sadly troubled. Even had Mazarin occupied himself with the education of the boy, that education would have been often broken. As it was, Mazarin seemed to prefer to keep the king in ignorance. On this point there is some difference of opinion; and M. Lacour-Gayet has made out the best possible case for Louis. There is, however, ample evidence that the child was neglected. The queen was passionately in love with her Italian mentor, though one cannot come by convincing proofs that she secretly married him. She sacrificed her maternal affections for her amorous inclinations; while her lover was too absorbed by the affairs of state to care for the dull lad. The torpor of Louis made an unpleasant contrast with the vivacity of his brother Philippe. He was patient, kindly, and obedient. La Porte, his valet de chambre, was his friend: he held Louis's hand and placed his head on the pillow to soothe the king to sleep. The kinglet's companions were, for the rest, servants who paid him no homage.

Louis accepted his humble position with resignation. In his childish games he did not play at being king, but at being valet. La Porte was shocked. He had a proper sense of the dignity of his royal charge. By a supreme effort he decided to shame him into a sense of his position. La Porte played the king. He sat in the royal armchair with his hat on his head. The lesson went home. Louis was annoyed and complained to his mother of the conduct of La Porte.

"If the king likes to pretend to be valet, then I may pretend to be king," replied La Porte wilily. The paradoxical play was not without its value. La Porte disliked the cardinal. For this he had good reason. He was devoted to his royal master and could not conceive a topsy-turvy court wherein the cardinal—a superior valet—played at being king, while the king was scorned. There is a graver reason for the conflict between Mazarin and La Porte which is recorded in contemporary memoirs. One can only hint at it here. When the senses of the boy began to awaken, the cardinal, it is alleged, endeavoured to divert them into perverse channels. The observant La Porte reported the circumstance to the queen, and for his pains was dismissed.

However this may be, Louis, who was afterwards to be the most magnificent of monarchs, insisting on the most elaborate observance of etiquette, could hardly be taught as a boy to command the respect which was due

to his rank. He remained uncovered in the presence of princes, and had to be reminded that he was already paying them honour in receiving them, and should not remove his hat.

If the king could play at being valet, he also loved to play at being a soldier. Precociously he learned military exercises and manœuvres. He could on occasion be angry, and one amusing anecdote could be related of a quarrel which degenerated into a spitting-match (and worse) with his little brother.

Mazarin was, of course, entrusted by the queen to supervise his education. His governess was the Marquise de Sénecy and his governor the obsequious Maréchal de Villeroy. The Abbé de Beaumont was his preceptor, and under him were, at different periods, the Abbé de Brisacier and the Jesuit Père Paulin. There were other masters—of mathematics, of drawing, of languages, of music, of gymnastics, of dancing; of equitation and so forth; while the sceptical La Mothe-Le Vayer served to counteract to some extent the clerical influences. Lacour-Gayet argues that politically Louis was well trained. As a boy he was given a history of his grandfather Henri IV, specially written by Beaumont; and La Porte read to him Mézeray's history as though it was a fairy-tale.

Maxims there were in plenty for him. If he did not appreciate them at the time they came back to him later. He was taught that action was the virtue

of kings; that kings could do whatever they pleased; that a king's subjects were his children in whom he should take a benevolent interest. It is possible that the little Louis absorbed more than he appeared to do. But outwardly at least he was a backward child.

Nevertheless, after giving due attention to these observations on the education of the king, it is impossible to dismiss the allegation against Mazarin that he shamefully neglected the child. The cardinal had grown tired of the affectionate queen, now approaching her fiftieth year, and he treated her rudely like a husband who has other things to do than listen to the stupidities of a cloying wife. Mazarin was the master and acted as such. The king was left without money in his pocket. He was left without fitting clothes. A growing boy, his garments were too small for him, and he felt the shame that is felt by any boy who is wearing ridiculous vestments two years old. The cardinal did not wish the king to be sufficiently instructed, lest he should take control too quickly; and although the teachers who were given the boy were competent enough they were sycophantic and did not press the boy to learn more than the average boy is inclined to learn. Beaumont at first tried to force Louis to be studious, but he received no support from Mazarin, and without support he could do nothing. But after all, the principal education is that which is acquired by observation. Louis was free to observe

and in spite of his phlegmatic temperament he observed. He observed that wars were among the chief weapons of government employed by Mazarin. He observed that courtiers were fond of intrigue and that the fickle and stupid people were often a nuisance. He observed that diplomacy was an unscrupulous business, and that the best diplomatist was he who could deceive his antagonist. He observed that ministers became insupportable if they were accorded too much power and that they should be kept in subordinate positions. These were lessons which were more important than those of Beaumont.

What was lacking, however competent had been the tutors, was parental affection. Louis had neither father nor mother: or rather Mazarin stood in the place of his father, and Anne was his mother. He feared and disliked Mazarin the usurper. He knew, as the youngest and most backward boy knows, the relations of his mother with her paramour. Yet although Mazarin stinted him of comfort and of love and robbed him of his mother, Louis admired him—he could not help admiring, with something of awe, the indispensable man on whom they all depended. He loved too his mother, but it was a love overlaid by sorrow; and though Louis was no Prince of Denmark his boyhood was a moral tragedy. Further, he had suffered greatly on the material side. While the cardinal was enriching himself, life at the Louvre

TURENNE, FROM THE PAINTING BY LE BRUN AT VERSAILLES

was, under its fine show, parsimonious and miserable. The hangings were in decay and the bed-clothes were in holes. It is not always fun, even for a boy, to stick his toes through the sheets; and at last the unpopularity of Mazarin grew so great that the Court had to fly from the violent mob, and the little Louis was taken on night journeys, and fell asleep in uncomfortable surroundings, such as would be scorned by the humblest person today.

The Fronde with all its miseries fell athwart the boyhood of Louis XIV. . . .

About the fortifications of Paris, in moats and trenches which had a serious military purpose, schoolboys played. They battled against each other with catapults. When the police came on the scene they scattered in all directions. When the police disappeared the tumult tossed higher. The schoolboys catapulted each other with renewed vigour.

That is how the Paris Parliament behaved. It noisily attacked the fiscal follies and speculations of the government; but when a member of the royal family went into the Salle de Saint-Louis, in the building now called the Palais de Justice, on the Ile de la Cité, the murmurs ceased. They broke out again as soon as Parliament was delivered of the court personage.

Bachaumont, one of the sons of Président Le Coigneux, compared this behaviour with that of the

Paris students. He was an ardent reformer and was annoyed at the shilly-shallying of Parliament. His word "catapult" struck the popular imagination. Yes, it was a schoolboy's battle of catapults—that is to say, of *frondes*. With their little slings, employed when the policemen's backs were turned, the magistrates could do little harm. They were Frondeurs, and the mock revolution was the Fronde.

Yet in England financial difficulties a few years before had brought about a demand that the king's ministers should be considered responsible to Parliament; and when the unfortunate Charles tried to intimidate Parliament by arresting its leaders, civil war began. This was in 1642. Oliver Cromwell was the leader of the Roundheads, as the Parliamentary party was called, against the Cavaliers, composed of nobles and the papists who rallied round Charles. In 1644 was fought the battle of Marston Moor, and in the following year the battle of Naseby, in which the king suffered disastrous defeats. His correspondence was seized and it was shown that he had endeavoured to bring armies from France into England. In 1646 he was a captive in the Isle of Wight. Two years later a High Court of Justice passed sentence upon him; and on January 30, 1649, Charles was beheaded in front of his Palace of Whitehall, and England became a commonwealth, or republic, under the Lord Protectorship of Cromwell.

Here was a lively lesson for the royal party in France. Would history repeat itself? There was in France general bankruptcy. There was Parliamentary resistance to royal authority. There were plots to bring Spanish armies into the country. There was civil war. There were royal flights. On several occasions a judicious observer, with the example of England so conspicuously before his eyes, might well have considered the monarchist cause lost in France.

The revolt was far more serious than the trivial name given to it in history might suggest. But there are several reasons which explain the survival of Louis. In the first place, he was a mere boy and did not arouse any personal animosity; indeed, on the contrary, he was beloved by the people. In the second place, Mazarin acted as a lightning conductor; it was upon him that anger was directed, and when the situation became critical Mazarin withdrew himself from France. In the third place, the various anti-governmental parties were never long in agreement, they were often bitter antagonists, and they changed sides with the utmost facility. There was the Parliamentary party, timid and subservient even in its resistance. There was the popular party, volatile and swayed in one sense or the other by sentiment. There was the aristocratic party composed of self-seeking and ambitious men and women, perpetually quarrelling about frivolities, beckoning foreign armies to their aid, and

generally demonstrating their insincerity, their lack of patriotism, and their animosity both to Parliament and to people. In the fourth place, there was no Oliver Cromwell in France; and perhaps one should add, there was no ideological preparation for revolution.

It would, however, be wrong to pretend, as most historians pretend, that there were no moral causes of the Fronde. The more the people were devoted to the young king the more they were incensed against the Italian adventurer of whose infamy they were persuaded. They had a clear idea of the misery which the king shared with them. They were aware of the corruption of the court. Moreover, one can, without straining the facts, regard Jansenism in France as the counterpart of Puritanism in England. Jansenism and Puritanism differed from each other greatly in doctrine, but they had this in common, that they induced to austerity and honesty. Parliament was impregnated with Jansenism, which was a perpetual reproach against the religious laxity of the Jesuits. The piety and the asceticism of Jansenism won widespread sympathy. Mazarin would have had the teachings of the Jansenists submitted to the pope; but Parliament and the Sorbonne, imbued with the Gallican spirit, were indignant at the proposal that French thought should be judged by a foreign power. Mazarin was obliged to excuse himself, pretending that all he

wished was that a point of theology should be settled amicably.

Later much more was to be heard of the Jansenists; and the mature Louis XIV championed the spiritual authority of the Court of Rome, and turned the full power of the state against the Jansenists who were living at Port-Royal-des-Champs, in the Valley of Chevreuse. He showed the utmost severity against those who had become heretics and in 1709 ordered the ruthless destruction of Port-Royal.

Nevertheless the bad state of finances was the principal cause of the rebellion. The wars had been ruinous. The tax-collectors were dishonest. On the one side were men and women who enriched themselves at the expense of the people. On the other side were paupers who were squeezed white and dry. Parliament mildly endeavoured to defend the people against rapacity. It feebly challenged an ordinance which prohibited building in the Paris suburbs except within fixed limits and which imposed monetary penalties on those who had already erected their houses on the outskirts of the growing city. Président Barillon, who espoused the cause of the poor proprietors, was, with others, arrested and escorted to a prison in the Alps, where he died a few days afterwards. Parliament thereupon meekly registered the edict. Then there was a tariff placed on merchandise entering Paris. It was represented by the unscrupulous

Italian, Emeri, the superintendent of finances, as an equitable tax, since it forced the rich to pay—as though there can be any comparison between payments of the rich and payments of the poor on foodstuffs! Then Mazarin struck at Parliament itself. Magisterial offices were virtually hereditary, though salable since they had originally been bought; but Mazarin now refused to renew the guaranties of the magistrates.

There existed an easy method of subduing Parliament. It consisted in ordering a *lit de justice*. The king, then under ten years of age, was conducted in great pomp to Parliament, surrounded by the princes and the officers of the Crown. In his presence there could be no discussion. According to custom Parliament could only register in silence edicts which were presented to it by the king in person. The magistrates did not speak while Louis sat on his elevated chair, but when the court retired protestations were loudly raised. The Paris Parliament wished to become political, though all political character was denied to it. Other French courts of justice united with the Paris Parliament. Mazarin annulled their union. Parliament boldly declared that it meant to model itself on the English Parliament.

The people were aroused. They asked for a definition of the laws under which they lived. They denounced the arbitrary and oppressive administra-

tion. They questioned the prerogatives of royalty. Demands of a revolutionary kind were made. It was held that taxes should not be enforced unless they were freely accepted by Parliament. It was sought to abolish the intendants of the provinces, appointed by Richelieu when he tried to centralize French government. It was asserted that sealed orders—*lettres de cachet*—should be abolished, that arrested persons should be tried immediately or released. This was obviously a condemnation of the system of absolute monarchy. Even the word "republic" was pronounced. Unfortunately, from the point of view of the reformists, Parliament was composed not of elected representatives but of magistrates who had purchased their posts; and mingled with their timid concern for the people was personal cupidity and professional ambition.

The First President of Parliament was Mathieu Molé, already aged. He showed some personal courage, but though he occasionally spoke bravely enough, in all grave matters he followed the interests of the court. Talon, the Advocate General, was subservient when faced with the haughty question of the queen: "Do you pretend to limit the power of the king?" He replied that he could not enter into judgment of his sovereign; it was not for magistrates to break the seals of royalty, or to penetrate into the secrets of the majesty and the mystery of authority. . . . It was

thus that Parliament behaved. There was no Cromwell—there was only a Talon. Parliament thwarted the revolution. It made only the Fronde—that is to say, it amused itself by flinging stones, like the schoolboys of Paris, when the backs of Mazarin and the queen were turned.

Chapter Four

THE BARRICADES

CONDÉ gained the battle of Lens. Mazarin rubbed his hands. The queen was haughtier than ever. Louis who was beginning to understand exclaimed: "Ah, how Parliament will be vexed!" The Condé victory meant not only that the people would forget their grievances in their patriotic enthusiasm, but that the troops would be brought back to Paris to act vigorously against malcontents. Immediately orders were given that three recalcitrant magistrates, Blanc-Mesnil, Charton, and Broussel, should be arrested. They were to be arrested, not secretly, not quietly, but in broad daylight, during the ceremony of transporting the captured enemy standards to Notre-Dame where the Te Deum was sung for the victory of Lens. Charton was warned in time and slipped away. Blanc-Mesnil was apprehended without incident. But old Broussel was taken from his home, where he was eating his sober repast, amid his family, and dragged into the street in his slippers. The populace sent up a cry of wrath. Broussel was the idol of the people; they

called him their father, their defender. Furiously they pushed aside the French and Swiss guards under Comminges. "To arms!" The dreadful word which was repeated in the reign of Louis XVI rang through the streets. "Liberté! Broussel!" The whole population was surging in the Paris thoroughfares. Hundreds of barricades were raised, the shops were closed, and iron chains blocked the passage of the prisoner. Molé, whose sincerity was not sufficiently apparent to the mob, was stopped in the street; a pistol was put to his head; he was told that if Parliament did not secure the release of Broussel he and all the members of Parliament would be massacred. His long beard was pulled. "When you have murdered me," he said calmly, "I shall require six feet of earth." But he went back to the palace to plead with the queen.

The Maréchal de la Meilleraye imprudently fired on the crowd, and would probably have been killed had not the coadjutor of Paris, Paul de Gondi (afterwards Cardinal de Retz) ranged himself with the people, exhorting the multitude to calm. An extraordinary man was Paul de Gondi. He came from a Florentine family and was destined to succeed his uncle as Archbishop of Paris. But his tastes were not for the Church. His conduct had been scandalous. His gallantry was notorious. He had fought duels. He was bold and ambitious. He would be content to be archbishop provided that he should be also Gover-

nor of Paris. Had he lived in the Middle Ages he would have made an excellent warrior-monk. As an ecclesiastical prince leading armies into battles he would have found his vocation. As it was he tried to make himself popular by distributing gifts to the masses, borrowing money to scatter it in alms. "Extravagant!" he exclaimed. "Why, at my age Cæsar owed six times more than I do." A dangerous man, cut on the pattern of the conspirator; but valuable, as Mirabeau might have been valuable, if attached to the royal party.

The queen might have used him, but he was a rival to Mazarin, and when, in the rôle of intercessor, he appeared at the palace, at once seeking to curry favour with the queen and to become the hero of the mob, Anne bitterly interrupted his speech to assure him that it was rebellious to imagine that there could be rebellion. The authority of the king, said the regent, would quickly restore order. Gondi was deeply wounded. Mazarin, however, was more astute. There was at court the Queen of England, who could testify to the dangers of these popular movements. The cardinal's efforts, together with those of the English queen, were on behalf of peace.

The following night the barricades were strengthened. Twelve hundred improvised barriers were set up and the Parisians were prepared to defend them. Parliament met at five o'clock in the morning and

decided that Comminges should be arrested for having arrested the magistrates. The chancellor, Séguier, tried to reach Parliament with orders from the queen but a hundred thousand men under arms would not let him pass. He took refuge in the Hôtel de Luynes. The populace began to pillage the house. Maréchal de la Meilleraye with four companies of guardsmen arrived in time to rescue the chancellor and his daughter, the Duchesse de Sully, who was wounded by a stray shot.

A hundred and sixty magistrates in their gowns and caps marched two by two to the palace. The barricades opened before them; the crowd cheered their passage. The queen gave orders for the release of the prisoners. Broussel made his triumphal entry into Paris. The people kissed his garments; he shed grateful tears. When he took his place in Parliament he immediately proposed that the barriers should be broken down.

But Parliament, though it continually trembled, tried to keep a brave front. It tinkered with the proposal of prohibiting foreigners from participating in the government of France. Mazarin was menaced. There was a rough working alliance of Parliament and people. If only the princes too would join Parliament and people! Condé had returned to Paris. Could he be induced to take sides? Gondi sounded him carefully—for Gondi was in all this the prime

plotter. "I am Louis de Bourbon," answered Condé, "and do not desire to upset the crown." The queen sought his aid. Condé's inclinations drew him towards Parliament and people, in spite of his proud reply to the wily coadjutor; for as their leader he would be supreme, whereas as the leader of the king's troops he would be a simple servant of the court. He hesitated. The queen wept. She besought him to be their protector. Flattery won the day, and the victor of Rocroi and Lens decided to save the royal household.

"I needed," wrote the coadjutor in his Memoirs, "a figurehead; and by good fortune I found him in the grandson of the great Henri, who spoke as they speak in the markets, and who had long golden locks." This was the Duc de Beaufort, the Roi des Halles. The sixteen-year-old Prince de Conti, Longueville, Bouillon, and others amused themselves by lining up with people and Parliament, though nobody by this time seemed to know precisely what they were to fight about.

The queen resolved to quit the capital. At midnight (January 6, 1649) she sent away her courtiers. No preparations had been made. Complete secrecy had been observed. At three o'clock she stole out holding her two sons by the hand. The Duc d'Orléans, the Grande Mademoiselle, and a few others came separately to the rendezvous, where

saddled horses, Spanish mules, and two closed carriages were waiting.

The night was bitterly cold. The thermometer was well below zero, and sharp scintillating stars shone on slippery streets. The horses could hardly maintain a footing. The little boys clung to their mother shiveringly. They had lived in a state of terror, with Royal Guards formidably swearing they were ready to die at their posts. Anything must have seemed better to Louis than such a wretched life in Paris.

But to breathe this frosty air at three in the morning, to realize that if they were captured it might, in spite of royal prestige, go hard with them, was a wretched situation even for a boy who had been humiliated by the magnificent Mazarin. The party made its perilous way—as in the following century did the party of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, trying to escape, but caught and brought ignominiously back to Paris by the revolutionaries—to its destination. It arrived safely. It found lodgings in Saint-Germain. No arrangements had been made for its reception. The rooms were painted and gilded, but in them were neither fires nor beds. The ladies who accompanied the queen had to sleep on straw. The men went out to cut wood in the forest. There was not enough food for the whole party, and the pages were sent back to Paris.

When the people found that the court had left

Paris they were troubled. Here was a complete rupture of relations. What would become of the city? Would it be besieged and reduced by famine? The bourgeois population was afraid of the artisan population; and took possession of the city gates. Parliament was convoked and received from the queen the command to sit at Montargis. It refused to take cognizance of the letter. It declared Mazarin an enemy of the king and of the state, and enjoined him to leave France. If he refused, then he was outlawed. Money was quickly raised for the defence of Paris—more money than had been raised for the queen. An army was improvised. Generals were appointed. The Prince of Conti was nominated Generalissimo. The Parliamentary troops began hostilities by sending out contingents to protect the convoys of foodstuffs. On their banners was written Queorimus Regum Nostrum—We search our King. As in 1789, the Bastille was seized.

Condé commanded the troops against Paris. He seized Lagny, Corbeil, Saint-Cloud, Saint-Denis. At Charenton the fighting was particularly fierce. The Parliaments of Rouen, of Caen, of Rennes, of Aix, of Bordeaux, declared themselves on the side of Paris. At this very moment in England Charles I perished on the scaffold.

Nevertheless Parliament protested that it was not opposed to the God-given king. It was only opposed

to his ministers. It was ready to present illustrious persons, chosen from the clergy, the nobility, and the magistrature, to form a council which would resolve problems of state by majority vote. These persons would be the Contis, the Retz', the Beauforts, the Broussels.

It is difficult to take this proposal seriously. Nowhere can one discern a profound conviction. Condé leading the king's troops was playing for his own hand. So on the popular side were Conti, the coadjutor, the Roi des Halles, and the members of Parliament. The people laughed, even at this critical moment, at their self-appointed chiefs. Pamphlets, satires, and chansons were launched in all directions. Fêtes and frivolities were mingled with the war. At the Hôtel de Ville, Madame de Longueville held her court. The men paraded in armour, pleased with their shining breastplates, and the women, wearing their best dresses and jewels, looked with languishing eyes on the ballroom heroes. In the square were martial trumpets. In the salon were amorous violins.

Molé and Talon sought peace. The negotiations lasted six weeks. They were prolonged by feminine intrigue and by masculine treason. There were those who would have called in the Spanish troops. At last the queen consented to a general amnesty and the convention of Rueil admitted the reduction of taxes and accorded Parliament some small privilege.

Nobody was satisfied. This was not peace but a truce. The war of chansons and satires continued. Mazarinades of a more vicious character were launched against the cardinal. The king stayed at Compiègne, and not until August did he return to Paris under the escort of Condé. His entry was splendid. Immense crowds were in the streets and the spectators were at every window and on the roofs of the houses. Even Mazarin, in the carriage of the king, was cheered. The next day the coadjutor and the clergy were officially received; and after them came representatives of Parliament and of corporations of merchants to pay homage. The king put himself at the head of a brilliant procession which went to Notre-Dame where mass was celebrated.

But Condé was disappointed. He had not come off so well as he had expected. He was reconciled with his brother Conti, and his sister, the Duchesse de Longueville. They pressed him to make further demands, persuaded that the queen dare not refuse anything to him, her saviour. Mazarin put him off with promises. Condé, puffed up with vanity, became insolent. He called the cardinal an "illustrious knave." In taking leave of him one day he said mockingly: "Adieu, Mars!" He surrounded himself with supercilious young men who were called *les petits maîtres*, one of whom wooed the queen. Condé became impossible; and at last the queen and the cardinal could

stand it no longer. They obtained the consent of Gaston d'Orléans, Lieutenant General of the Kingdom, to the arrest of Condé. Condé, Conti, and Longueville, attending the Louvre, were approached by three captains of the guards, and informed that they were in custody. "Such then is the price of my services!" exclaimed Condé.

The people rejoiced in the arrest of the men whom they had not long before rapturously applauded. The nobility felt themselves menaced. Some of them fled. In the provinces there were fresh revolts, though most of them were easily repressed. The young king was taken to Guienne, where the rebellion was fiercest, in the hope that his presence would restore order, leaving the unstable Duc d'Orléans in charge of Paris. Then Turenne, committing an act of treachery, placed himself at the head of a Spanish army and entered Champagne. He marched on Paris to release Condé, but by a strange stroke of irony the forces sent by Mazarin to meet him defeated the greatest soldier of the age! Again there was a general amnesty, but Condé was kept in prison. Mazarin forgot his promise to give a cardinal's hat to Gondi, and Gondi brought about a coalition of the nobles who supported Condé and some of the members of Parliament. The old Fronde and the new Fronde were united. Parliament called on the queen to liberate the princess and send

away Mazarin. She was obliged to yield, and the cardinal retired to Saint-Germain.

This was not sufficient. Parliament declared that Mazarin should leave the country, together with his numerous family of nieces, and never return. The queen again resolved to leave Paris with her son. The Frondeurs learned of her project. On the night that the royal party was ready to depart—the little king clad and booted—the Frondeurs invaded the palace. There was not a moment to lose. Boots and clothes were snatched from the king. He was put to bed with instructions how he should behave. The queen faced the invaders, and innocently asked them what they wanted. They replied that they did not wish their king to be again carried off from Paris. The queen feigned astonishment. She asked them to mount with her softly into the bedchamber of the king. They followed her. They looked upon the little Louis asleep in his bed. They apologized humbly. They went downstairs on tiptoe, afraid to awaken the excellent dissimulator, and they severely reproached those who had spread the false report that the king was again about to fly.

In the meantime the cardinal was hurrying from France. But he went by way of Havre, where the princes were imprisoned, in order that he might himself, by liberating them, curry favour with them. Some of the supporters of Condé spoke of making him

king. But there was far too much division. The nobles railed against the disorders of the state, and the disappearance of their former privileges. The clergy, assembled in council, agreed with the nobles. It was mooted whether there should be a convocation of the States-General. But various diatribes against Parliament shattered the union of the old and the new Fronde. Condé was dissatisfied with the court which had imprisoned him, but also with Parliament composed of niggling lawyers. He was irritated beyond endurance, and finding the way to power barred against him in Paris he went to the South in order to prepare an expedition which might give him the crown. Guienne rallied to him, and Spain was not unwilling to help him to foster civil war. But as Condé rebelled, Turenne renewed his allegiance; and the two supreme French generals were pitted against each other by the artful Italian manipulator of marionettes, Mazarin.

Mazarin in exile had managed to keep complete control of affairs. He had ruled, through Anne, as though he were at Paris. And now (December 1651), sardonically watching events, he decided to return to the side of the queen who was subjugated by him and dependent on his counsel.

Chapter Five

CORONATION

LOUIS attained his majority. It was, for the kings of France, fixed at thirteen. He was a backward boy. He was timid, silent, slow. Yet Mazarin is said to have detected hidden qualities. "He starts a little late," observed the cardinal, "but he will go farther than others." And again: "There is in him the stuff of four kings and an honest man." These remarks have no great significance; they were probably casual, amusing, conversational, not the deliberate expression of a sober judgment; and as they struck the cardinal's hearers as paradoxical, astonishing, they show the general opinion of Louis as a boy.

The queen announced that her son in future would govern by himself. This was, of course, not true. It meant that Anne of Austria and Mazarin would continue to govern, but that they would make more use of the king's name. It was decided that his majority should be proclaimed with pomp. On September 8, 1651, he rode through Paris to hold a *lit de justice*. He was accompanied by all the princes—except the

Prince de Condé. There was the Duc d'Orléans, his uncle, the Duc d'Anjou, his brother, the Prince de Conti, and all the peers, the marshals of France, and the officers of the crown. The young seigneurs rode by the side of Louis, but contemporary records have it that the king was conspicuous by the skill with which he rode—for he loved all physical exercises—and, above all, by the dignity of his bearing.

He entered Parliament preceded by the four presidents and the six councillors, followed by the queen-mother, and the princes and seigneurs of the Court. He sat upon his throne and declared: "Messieurs, I have come into my Parliament to inform you that, in accordance with the law of my state, I take into my own hands the government; and I trust that, by the goodness of God, I shall exercise it with piety and justice. The chancellor will make known to you in more detail my intentions."

The Chancellor Séguier delivered an address. He eulogized Louis XIII and the queen-regent, and he predicted that the new reign would be still more brilliant. He made an allusion to the absence of Condé. Then the queen who, in private life, kept her son in subjection, publicly declared that she was happy to lay down the authority which she had exercised for nearly nine years. She approached the throne, she bent her knees. The king raised her, embraced her, and said: "Madame, I thank you for the care that you

have given to my education, and to the administration of my kingdom. I pray you to continue to give me your good counsels, and I desire that, after me, you shall be the head of my council."

One by one the princes of the royal blood, the secular and ecclesiastical peers, the officers of the crown, the members of Parliament, rendered homage to Louis.

It is generally agreed that this solemn ceremony was a fiction. It is generally agreed that Louis was still a child, obedient to his mother, totally ignorant of state affairs. When he was obliged to express the royal will he repeated a lesson—as a schoolboy might give a public recitation.

On what small things turn great events! Condé, though embittered by his imprisonment, at the last moment hesitated to engage himself on the side of the Spanish. He asked the Duc d'Orléans to intercede for him. The queen was willing, and a reconciliation seemed certain. Condé awaited a reply at Angerville. Orléans sent the reply by the Parliamentarian De Croissy. De Croissy set off for Angerville near Étampes, but Condé awaited him at Angerville in Gâtinais. When the messenger did not appear, Condé believed that his advances had been rejected. "I draw the sword reluctantly," he said, "but I shall probably be the last to sheathe it." The Spanish offered him an army and a fleet. All south-west

France supported him. Civil war was imminent. Such was the coming-of-age of Louis XIV.

Appearances, which favoured Condé, were deceptive. The people were tired of war and had other concerns. We shall hear much of the sad lot of the common folk during Louis's reign. Let us begin with this contemporary description: "No tongue can tell, no pen can express, no ear can hear, that which we have seen. Everywhere famine and death, and bodies without burial. Those who remain, gather in the fields stalks of rotten oats, and make bread of mud. Their faces are black. They are no longer men, but phantoms. War has spread equality. Lizards and dogs a week dead are eaten." The brutality of the soldiers in the countryside was unspeakable. Atrocities of the vilest kind were committed. The missionaries of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul did what they could to relieve distress, and it was admirable, but it was inadequate.

When the Vicomte de Turenne was given the command of the royal army, the king, accompanied by his mother, was taken into the agitated provinces again in the hope that his appearance would calm the people. In fact, the appearance of the king was magical. Rebellion ceased wherever he went. Meanwhile Mazarin was marching into France at the head of an army which he had raised. This was too much for Parliament, and again Mazarin was declared an out-

law. Much Mazarin cared! At the end of January 1652, he arrived at Poitiers where was the court. The king went to meet him and, perplexed by the difficulties of government, demonstrated his joy. The cardinal was again Prime Minister. The next day, the royal army, under Turenne, marched to Paris.

Yet matters were not easy. The unfortunate king was always in some peril of being taken captive by Condé. On one occasion he was rescued just in time by Turenne. He grew weary of wandering in the wake of armies. The attitude of Parliament was uncertain. It was for the king, but against the cardinal. The attitude of Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, was all too certain. He joined Condé. At Bléneau (April 1652) the royalist troops under Maréchal d'Hocquincourt were surprised and dispersed. King, queen, and cardinal appeared to be lost, at the mercy of Condé. But Turenne was at Briare, close by, and when the fugitives burst into his camp he reassured them and answered for their safety, and with only four thousand men, against an army three or four times greater, by skilful manœuvring, which was afterwards highly praised by Napoleon, arrested the course of Condé. From a hilltop Louis saw the villages burning in the plain: that was his kingdom, the prey of civil war; and he, the king, was chased like a stag.

What a life for the king! What an inauspicious opening of the great reign! No wonder the lad was

willing to leave matters to Mazarin, to Turenne, to anybody. His mother was always in tears. She was now thanking Turenne as the saviour of the state.

At Paris Parliament received Condé coldly. It accused him of lèse-majesté, it could not forgive him his open alliance with the foreign enemy. Turenne escorted the king safely to Saint-Germain. Then he fell upon the army of the princes as it was feasting, and partly destroyed it.

Yet Condé, at Paris, was bullying Parliament. Beaufort, the Roi des Halles, managed to get together four or five thousand ruffians to intimidate the magistrates and make them pronounce for Condé. There was a tumultuous irruption into the hall of deliberations of Beaufort's ruffians. Three presidents were grievously wounded, and twenty-five persons were killed. Here was a blunder as well as a crime. Paris which detested Mazarin began to say that his return would be better than the return of the cardinal's adversary, Condé.

The decisive battle was in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Turenne and Condé themselves were black and sweaty in the thick of the fight, firing point-blank at each other. The combat was furious and prolonged on this sweltering hot day of July. Many captains were killed. The best blood of France was shed. The warriors dropped with fatigue. Still a further effort was necessary. Turenne's artillery suddenly came up,

and thundered on the troops of Condé. This was the end. But, no! The tables were inconceivably turned. The cannon of the Bastille began to fire, not upon Condé but upon the royal troops; and the gates of the city were thrown open to receive the fugitives of Condé! Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the Grande Mademoiselle, cousin of the king, had done this thing, this incredible thing, which saved Condé from annihilation. She it was who had given these amazing orders. On the heights of Charonne the king and Mazarin, watching the issue of the battle, rejoicing at the defeat of Condé, were dismayed at the reverse suffered by Turenne. When the explanation came the wily cardinal shook his head and murmured: "She has killed her husband!"

For Mademoiselle, though older than Louis, had looked upon the king as her future husband—*mon petit mari.* Her disloyalty rendered such a marriage impossible. The shot which was turned upon the king destroyed a queen.

But Condé was not saved for long. He had rendered himself odious to the Parisians. Another massacre occurred in the Hôtel de Ville. A provisional government was vainly appointed. There was, under Condé, pillage and assassination and confusion. Mazarin astutely retired to Sedan. Paris, as the cardinal anticipated, presently demanded its king, and a deputation waited upon him at Compiègne beseeching

him to return. Condé turned tail and joined the Spaniards in Flanders. Louis once more made a triumphal entry into Paris. The next day he held a *lit de justice* at the Louvre, and pronounced the annullation of the measures taken by Parliament to secure its independence, and quashed all the decrees against Mazarin. A few days later Mazarin was recalled, and this time nobody protested.

Louis was crowned at Rheims on June 7, 1654. By this time Mazarin had well established his power. The nobles had been taught to respect the trio. Parliament had been thoroughly whipped. It is related, with doubtful truth, that Louis, learning as he set out to hunt that the magistrates were protesting against an edict of Mazarin, rode from Vincennes in hunting costume, spurs on heels and whip in hand, burst into the Grand'Chambre, and addressing the councillors, astonished at his appearance and shocked at his dress, declared: "Everybody knows that our troubles have been caused by these Parliamentary assemblies. In future it is my will that they should cease. Therefore I command you to stop your deliberations on the edicts that have been enregistered in a *lit de justice*. Monsieur le Premier Président, I forbid you to tolerate these assemblies, and I forbid each of you individually to demand them."

Had the sixteen-year-old king already something of his subsequent assurance? Was he already in some

measure the sovereign who is said to have exclaimed "L'État c'est moi"? The details of this sense are probably not authentic. No contemporary seems to have recorded that Louis flourished a riding whip from the royal throne. Yet the fable illustrates the developing character of the king.

Doubtless his coronation was arranged by Mazarin as one of those impressive ceremonies which serve, by striking the imagination of the people, to consolidate governmental power. But there is evidence that Louis himself was beginning to be conscious of his rôle. While Mazarin lived he could not dismiss the man who had watched over his difficult boyhood, who had saved his crown (though he it was who had first placed it in danger), who was intimately linked with his mother, whose experience was full and whose ability, though of a foxy nature, was adequate to every emergency. Louis disliked Mazarin—not as Hamlet hated the usurper to his father's throne and his mother's affections—but as a healthy young man, aware of his theoretical supremacy in the state, would naturally dislike the master with whom he cannot dispense. It appears to me that there is no difficulty in reconciling the subservience of the king to Mazarin, and his assertion of absolute independence on the death of Mazarin. He could not do otherwise than suppress his feelings in the presence of the cardinal, who had seen him grow up, whom he had always

known as the true head of the state, who, when he visited the private apartments of the cardinal, often kept him waiting in the antechamber as though he were a mere hanger-on of the court. Customs of boyhood cannot be changed easily. Yet every year Louis was finding the rule of the cardinal more irksome. Every year he was riper for revolt, but was restrained by habits of respect, and by a sort of awe of the man who manipulated all the strings of state. When finally Mazarin disappeared from the scene, deeply as Louis was grieved at the loss of the arm on which he had leaned for so long, he breathed a sigh of relief. He instantly determined that never again would he fall under subjection, that to avoid a second tutelage he would solicit less assistance than kings are accustomed to receive. From one extreme he went to the other. It was an inevitable reaction. It was a violent release of inhibitions. The very suppression of Louis in his youth helped to make him the most self-centred and self-reliant of French kings.

This coronation had a double effect on the relations of Louis and his minister. It aroused in Louis a sense of his own importance. But it emphasised the importance of Mazarin in the creation of that importance. Not long ago the boy Louis had slept between torn sheets. He had been kept without pocket-money. He had grown out of his clothes and his clothes were not replaced by a miserly but magnificent master who

had entered France penniless but who had enriched himself so hugely that he had lately raised and paid an army out of his private savings.

As Louis stood in the cathedral, awaiting the outpouring of the sacred oil, he thought of that night when, in order to escape the violence of the mob, he had feigned to sleep, and the ringleaders were melted at the sight of the innocent head on the pillow. He remembered that he had been carried over slippery roads on nocturnal flights, and had seen his followers bedless, fireless, and foodless; that he had been dragged at the tail of an army, and pursued on miry paths by those who hoped to sit on his father's throne; that he had been rescued, a fugitive from Paris, and apparently a prisoner of Condé, only by the timely dexterity, the miraculous intervention, of a rival general—Turenne; that he had watched with boyish trepidation the battle of Saint-Antoine at the gates of the great city, and had seen the treacherous guns of the Bastille trained by his ambitious cousin on the royalist forces; that he had seen his last chance vanish for a moment in a puff of white smoke, and reappear only because the Condé party pillaged and massacred and alienated the people of Paris. And sharing his lot in all this was the cardinal, and the triumph of the cardinal was his triumph.

The contrast was unimaginable. Here he was in the old city of Rheims, welcomed by bishops and

magistrates and throngs of his subjects; and the finest cathedral in France received him in gala array—sumptuous tapestries hanging from pillars and galleries, wonderful carpets spread in the aisles, heavy embroidered cloths, priceless jewelled ecclesiastical ornaments, on tables and altars. There was his throne of purple and of gold. For several days there had been marvellous ceremonies, and the ultimate ceremony was indeed splendid beyond splendour. In silver robes Louis proceeded to the cathedral, with trumpets and fifes playing, escorted by priests and soldiers in coloured vestments, and marshals and heralds and gentlemen attendants; and in the church the queen-mother and the leading ladies of the realm and the cardinal and the ambassadors, and, for a moment, most important person in the gorgeous throngs, the Prior of Saint-Rémy, he who brought the holy ampulla, with its sacred perfumed oil, for the king's anointing, to the Bishop of Soissons.

Things could not be quite the same again. The oil, the gift of heaven, had been poured over his head and hands and in the openings of his dress, and ring and sceptre and crown had been given him in the presence of the mightiest of his realm and the accredited representatives of other lands. From that moment Louis was—under Mazarin—truly king, the anointed of the Lord, the accepted of the people. . . .

Yet the war with Spain still went on, and Condé

was still with the enemy. Mazarin seriously occupied himself with the political education of the king, and his military education began. Louis was sent on his first campaign. He was vigorous and asked for no royal privileges. He did not go to the war in gilded carriage, with courtly equipage. He went on horseback. He visited the front lines, the advanced posts, with bullets flying around him. He ate with his generals and he lodged as fortune befell. He took a healthy delight in fatiguing marches, and was pleased to be muddied to the thighs. It was in this campaign that Turenne forced Condé and the Archduke of Austria to raise the siege of Arras. There were sieges and retreats and advances, but no decisive blows. War was conducted with small armies in somewhat leisurely style. There was, too, a search for allies. Mazarin was not overtroubled with religious or political scruples; and just as Richelieu, a Catholic cardinal, had accepted the aid of the Protestants against Austria, so Mazarin made common cause with Cromwell, the beheader of Charles, against Spain. France had given hospitality to the bereaved English Queen Henrietta, daughter of Henri IV, and therefore aunt of Louis XIV, and to her two sons. But these ties of blood could not prevail against purely political considerations. In 1657 a treaty was concluded by which England promised France a fleet and an army. England was to reserve for herself Dunkirk, and France

was to cease to be the asylum of the sons of Charles. These two princes immediately left Turenne and went over to Condé.

Spain suffered defeat. The English conquered Jamaica and burnt the Spanish galleys at Cadiz. The Spanish went to the relief of Dunkirk, the key to Flanders, besieged by sea and land. At the battle of the Dunes they were utterly smashed by Turenne. At the same time they were beaten in Italy. Spain asked for peace, and the Treaty of the Pyrenees, momentous in its consequences, was signed.

Chapter Six

FIRST LOVE

THE Treaty of the Pyrenees was fatal for two lovers. One of its first conditions was that the King of France should be married to the Infanta of Spain. Marie-Thérèse, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, was obviously a desirable match. The union might be expected to bring peace between the two antagonists. Moreover, by this treaty, which was negotiated by Don Luis de Haro and Mazarin in the Isle of the Conference (as it was afterwards called) in the Bidassoa, at the foot of the Pyrenees, France was confirmed in the possession of Alsace. She retained Artois, and towns in the Duchy of Luxembourg, and in Flanders, and in Hainaut, and Roussillon and Cerdagne, and she returned Lorraine to the duke only on condition that he should disarm his strong places—but, as he did not, this was equivalent to the French acquisition of Lorraine.

Condé was pardoned on abandoning the territory he had received from the King of Spain.

Undoubtedly this Treaty of the Pyrenees reveals

the diplomatic skill of Mazarin. Westphalia began his reputation. The Pyrenees crowned it. For fifteen years he had meditated on the marriage of the French and Spanish houses. He had written, at the time of the Westphalian Congress, that such a union would enable France to aspire to the succession of Spain. The might of the allied kingdoms would be irresistible. The French king, it was not too much to hope, would be elected emperor. Thus Paris would control France, Spain, and the Germanies. They were extraordinarily ambitious, but these plans were not altogether beyond the possibility of accomplishment. If at the same time Mazarin could become pope, then there would be such an alliance of spiritual and temporal power as the world had never seen. Even though the full achievement proved impracticable, it cannot be denied that Mazarin schemed greatly. It is true that in 1657, on the death of Ferdinand III, Leopold I was elected emperor, but Mazarin constituted the League of the Rhine, by which Rhineland princes and electors and the kings of Sweden and Denmark associated themselves with France, and constituted, within the Empire, a force independent of the emperor, ready to bar the Hapsburgs on the Rhine and in the Scandinavian countries.

Mazarin boasted that if his tongue was not French his heart was French. The boast was not without reason. In negotiating the marriage of Louis and

Marie-Thérèse he sacrificed, on the altar of the state, the first and perhaps the only love of the king, and the happiness and power of his own niece, Marie Mancini.

The marriage contract was artfully drawn up with a view to subsequent claims to the Spanish succession, and it was afterwards to cause the bloody war which nearly wrecked France and darkened the declining years of Louis XIV.

In it was an article by which the infanta renounced the rights that she might hold by birth to the succession of her father—that is to say, to the throne of Spain—for herself and her children. But there was a condition. *Moyennant* is the French word on which the renunciation rested. *Moyennant* the effective payment of a dower of 500,000 crowns (écus d'or) the infanta gave up her heritage. The payment was never effected. Therefore, it was afterwards argued, the surrender did not hold good. Mazarin had foreseen this, though he was long dead when the terrible sequel was enacted. That word *moyennant* was perhaps not his. It is said to have been put in at the suggestion of Hugues de Lyonne. But Mazarin would have thought of something, and he adopted *moyennant* with Machiavellian astuteness. There was never a more subtle or a more deadly word put in an international treaty.

Two years before, Louis had fallen in love with

Marie Mancini, the homeliest of the nieces of the cardinal. To be sure, he had earlier *affaires de cœur* but they were without great importance. Thus he was thrown into the arms of the one-eyed Comtesse de Beauvais, and there was some liaison with Mademoiselle de la Mothe-Houdancourt. The beautiful Olympe Mancini, the sister of Marie, also enjoyed his attentions for a time, and Louis and she remained close friends after she became the Comtesse de Soissons; she was the mother of Prince Eugène of Savoie who, with Marlborough, inflicted defeats on the French armies many years later.

They married well, these nieces of the cardinal. One of them was bestowed on the Prince of Conti, and another became Duchess of Modena. A third was wedded to the Duc de Mercœur. The husband of one of them was Duc de Mazarin. Yet another was Duchesse de Bouillon; and another Duchesse de la Meilleraye. The family of adventurers and adventuresses set itself up well.

But Marie (in the happy phrase of Mme. Taillandier) was the Cinderella of the family. She was regarded as ugly and graceless and badly behaved, and it seemed that the only thing to do with her was to put her in a convent. What then induced the king to choose this ill-favoured girl for confidante, when the court was filled with beautiful and witty women

MAZARIN AND ANNE D AUTRICHE, FROM THE PAINTING BY BONNINGTON

who demanded nothing better than to become his mistresses?

Could it be that Louis, who was to be the Sun-King, dazzling Europe by his glory, Louis the Resplendent, Louis the Refulgent, still loved to play at being a valet? Somewhere hidden under the brilliant exterior was a timorous heart. At different periods of his life he selected as his companions the lowliest and the least respected of the ladies of his entourage. First there was Marie, the unlovely Marie, the despised Marie. Then there was the insignificant shrinking Louise de La Vallière. Finally there was the elderly Madame de Maintenon, widow of the scurrilous writer Scarron, a poor ailing bigoted woman who had acted as governess to the king's illegitimate children. There were certainly others of a different temper, such as the diabolic Madame de Montespan, who held the king by a sort of voluptuous terrorism. Yet it is clear that Louis was irresistibly drawn to the unfortunate, to the persecuted, to the oppressed. He was most at home with the women who were least like the *grandes dames* of the court.

Not sufficient emphasis has been laid upon this curious contrast in the character of Louis; and at the outset of his amorous life we must stop to consider his penchant for the feeble. Here was the man who was thought, with some justice, to be the mightiest monarch of his time, who was grandiloquent in the highest

degree, who received adulation as a right, who did not blush to be compared with Apollo; and here was this same man seeking the intimacy of those who had suffered, those who had small pretensions to rank, beauty or dignity. It is an unexpected antithesis, and if we examine the mystery we shall assuredly find that Louis's resolve to impose himself on the great had the same secret origin as his delight in the companionship of the lowly.

Doubtless in our day, the science of psycho-analysis, which has been prolific in phrases, would, if it concerned itself with the case of Louis XIV, employ the expression "inferiority complex." Louis was never to overcome his youthful experience. He had been neglected by a haughty capricious mother, who alternated between libertinage and piety, already (in the reckoning of the time) comparatively old when she bore her belated son, who was fond of her in a somewhat cringing manner. His mother's lover was his severe spiritual father, the cardinal, who kept him in his humble place, and starved him materially and intellectually. La Porte, the valet, was perhaps his truest friend. During the most impressionable years Louis had been made to realize his weakness, trailed as he was at the tail of armies, unstable as his situation was in the tumult of the Fronde. And at the same time he was reminded, with apparently bitter irony, of his lofty station.

It is worth while dwelling on these facts, for they seem to me to throw a flood of light on Louis. The dull boy received an indelible impression of his inferiority, and when he was called upon to fulfil his rôle in later life he exaggerated, by a natural reaction, his own importance, and demanded a veneration that verged on the grotesque. But in his soul he was always the neglected child, the playmate of valets. Even his conception of kingship was not exempt from servility. Other kings, with large careless assurance, had thought it proper to ignore their duties—to leave the cares of the state in the hands of ministers. Louis took himself seriously. He was a strenuous worker. He spent more hours at his desk on humdrum tasks than the most conscientious clerk. Certainly he amused himself in public and demanded brilliant fêtes; but these things were part of his functions, and they never interfered with the strict fulfilment of the job which was entrusted to him. We hear much about his splendour. We hear less about his simplicity. They are not in contradiction except on the surface. Their roots are identical.

It is in his love affairs that a man reveals himself; and though writers about Louis XIV have laid stress on his secretiveness, I consider that he amply revealed himself in his love affairs. What he wanted was sympathy, a want intensified by early neglect, and that sympathy he did not find among the distinguished

members of a hostile court perpetually spying out his foibles. To them he had to present a glittering front. To them he had to be secretive, for secretiveness is the armour of sensitiveness. Where could he find the sympathy for which he longed, the consolation for past humiliations and present fears, save in the society of women who, too, were strangers, who, too, were rejected by the artificial world of intrigue, malice, jealousy, and cruelty?

There, I take it, lies the key to Louis's character, and the explanation of his unquestionable passion for Marie Mancini.

The facts can be stated briefly. Marie Mancini was doubtless misunderstood by her mother and by the cardinal. She was neither handsome in person nor sweet in disposition. She was thin, dry, and dark. She was disobedient. While her sisters were well treated she, the Ugly Duckling, was imprisoned in her room; and she watched with growing bitterness the success of her more favoured sisters. She watched, too, the meteor-like passage of the Queen Christina of Sweden, who renounced her crown to escape the tyranny of a husband, who determined to "live her life," and who scandalized Europe by her insolent assertion of freedom. Marie was not unintelligent. She was romantic. She was rebellious. When she met the king, during the illness of her mother, she dreamed, in the privacy of her chamber, of the mar-

vellous revenge she might take on her sisters if Louis noticed her. And why not? More romantic things had happened—at least in story-books. Her head was stuffed with poetry, and her heart with passion. Besides, the amity of the king offered for her a way of escape, and she was cunning enough to use every womanly weapon on the growing boy.

Louis was first drawn to her by pure compassion for her misfortunes. They resembled in some sense his own. He was then eighteen years of age. She was still younger. He, a healthy ignorant boy, was embarrassed in the company of the *grandes dames*, elegant, satirical, affecting literary and artistic tastes which he did not share. She was kept in retirement, thrown on her own resources, was totally different from the mocking ladies. There were obvious links between them. They were both unsophisticated in a cynical court. They were both aware of their deficiencies, anxious to educate themselves up to the level of the courtiers. So they read together, perilous poisonous poetic books. They wrote long letters to each other, filled with tenderness. They sighed in the moonlight. Ah, if they could only live apart from the vanities which surrounded them! The artificialities and the responsibilities of kingship seemed so tawdry!

Louis's liaison with Olympe had been devoid of sentiment. It had been a mere stimulation of the

senses. Marie was different. She did not offer herself sensually to the King. Their relations, according to the available evidence, were Platonic. Louis found in her a haven of refuge. They understood each other—or supposed they did. They saw each other not only at the Louvre but chiefly in the grounds of the palaces outside Paris—at Compiègne and at Fontainebleau—and in the country mansion of the cardinal at Vincennes. To ride in the forest, to picnic on the lawn, to glide along the canal to the sound of violins—this was life. Their idyll was an island of sympathy in a cold unsympathetic sea.

Hitherto Louis had been a hearty youth, rejoicing in clotted clothes, in robust exercises, in brutal love-making. Now, under the influence of first love his sentimental education began. Not that he was less energetic on proper occasions; for he wished to be a hero for Marie. And what of Marie? Now that the king was at her feet, what was her design? It would have been strange had she not cherished the ambition of marrying him. Had not Louis addressed her as "My Queen"? But at the beginning she was not concerned with matrimony. Matrimony and love, to inflamed imaginations, are not merely separate, but irreconcilable. Whatever might be their lot, whatever the conventions might ordain, whatever husband was provided for Marie, whatever wife for Louis,

MISTRESSES OF THE KING, FROM AN OLD LITHOGRAPH

they would continue to comprehend each other—these two uncomprehended beings.

At bottom the valet-king was trying to be a hero to himself and to his lady, and Cinderella was content to revel in her unexpected good fortune. Alas! midnight was soon to chime, and the splendid pageant of fancy was to disappear on the last stroke of the clock.

When Louis's marriage was arranged Marie fought desperately to keep him. This was a natural evolution. The first choice of Mazarin was not the Spanish princess, but the Princesse Marguerite de Savoie. It was a mere feint. The cardinal's real purpose was to confront Spain with the prospect of losing a desirable union that would bring peace to the two nations. The court set out on its journey to Lyons where Louis and Marguerite were to meet. Even on this journey Louis and Marie were constantly together and were not distressed at the object of the encounter. They could still not realize that their romance was doomed.

Why did not Mazarin, whose ambitions were unbounded, not facilitate the marriage of his niece with Louis? It is explained that he was afraid of popular outcry, of the disapproval of European courts. That is an insufficient reason. He had not discouraged the relations of Marie and the king, though he had put in charge of his niece a respectable duenna, Madame de Venel, to prevent matters going too far. Precisely in preventing matters from going too far in the period

of courtship lay the greatest hope of a permanent union. The cardinal was never troubled about the morals of his nieces, but he was troubled about his own situation.

At times he was tempted to place his niece on the throne of France. It would have been possible. The Mancinis were already the "adopted nieces" of the queen. He had not scrupled to defy the opinion of the nobles, the Parliament, and the people, when he clung to the queen, when he refused, though civil war ensued, to be shaken from his post of minister and real ruler of France. Nor would he have hesitated to defy opinion in the case of his niece had it been to his profit. The king was malleable enough, and Marie, in spite of romantic literature, would quickly have seized her opportunity had it presented itself. No, the true reason is that the triumph of Marie would have meant the downfall of Mazarin. She was by no means grateful to her uncle. She had a just grievance against him. She hated him as her tyrant as well as the tyrant of Louis. If she were queen, Mazarin would no longer be minister.

As for Louis, he was, by this time, not only willing but eager to espouse Marie. At the end, as the crucial moment grew nigh, he fell into a pitiful state. He was almost in open revolt against his mother and the cardinal. But though he blustered he was still subjugated. He was still the slave of his guardians, and

the slave of a greater tyrant—the state. The young man was not, despite opinion to the contrary, a king to follow his own whims. He was at heart deeply submissive. The habit of submission had become the temperament of submission. There is a more profound sense in the words "L'État, c'est moi" than has been usually given to them. Louis was the principal secretary of the state. To it he owed obedience when he no longer owed it to his mother and to Mazarin.

"Sire," said Marie reproachfully, "you are king, you weep, and you let me go."

The marriage with Marguerite fell through. The Spanish king could not allow a union between Savoie and France. Don Luis de Haro went secretly to meet Mazarin. The Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed. Marie-Thérèse was included in the price paid for peace. The Princess of Savoie was bundled off. The authority of Mazarin prevailed over the will of the king. Louis was heartbroken. Marie, raging but helpless, was married to the Constable Colonna.

Chapter Seven

KINGSHIP

AFTER the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed Mazarin went to Toulouse where the court had been for several weeks. The king and his effeminate brother Philippe went far on the road to meet him, and as usual treated him as the true King of France. It was decided not to return to Paris before the marriage had been celebrated; but it was necessary to await the warmer weather. Philip IV of Spain was seriously ill and could travel with difficulty but he hoped that the sacrifice which he was making would bring peace to him and to his descendants. Louis preferred to pass the winter in Provence. At Aix the Prince de Condé reappeared. He flung himself on his knees before Louis, beseeching him to forget the past. The king consented: "I shall not remember those events which have injured only you." They had, of course, injured France; but Louis, in spite of the loss of Marie, was feeling generous and happy. Was there not the Comtesse de Soissons—the belle Olympe—who had returned to him?

Nothing interfered with the king's holiday, which had been earned by years of war and civil commotion. As the Te Deum was sung at Aix (February 2, 1660) the unfortunate Gaston, uncle of Louis, died in exile at Blois. That event might well have furnished an occasion for the singing of a second Te Deum. Gaston had been a restless man, mixed up in many intrigues, but though he was an enemy to the king, he was not an enemy to be greatly feared. His life was marked by agitation but not by energy. The appanage of Gaston was given to Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, Louis's brother, the perfumed youth who later married Henrietta, the sister of Charles II of England, and so furnished Louis with the cleverest of his mistresses. In May the court went to Bayonne and hence to Saint-Jean-de-Luz. At the same time Charles II, who had been a fugitive, peacefully ascended the throne of England. Thus, remarks a French historian, "While France was rejoicing, the whole Christian world was happy, as though Heaven had willed that no cry of war, no royal affliction, should trouble that great fête of peace."

The preliminaries of the marriage took place in the first days of June, and the ecclesiastical celebration on June 9. Of Marie-Thérèse there is little to be said. She was not a princess who could have won the affection of Louis. She was without brains and without beauty. She was stockish, short-necked, almost de-

formed. She was heavy-jowled and bad complexioned. She had black teeth. She cried a good deal, but she laughed when Louis paid her attention, and everybody was kept informed of their intimate relations. Yet she had a sweet naïveté, a certain gravity and a true tenderness. From infancy she had been brought up to be queen. When an indiscreet lady at the French court asked her if she had never had suitors at the court of Madrid, she answered: "No, except my father there was no king in Madrid."

Louis did not, since he could not have Marie, resent the choice. He quite understood that his marriage was purely political, and the manners of the time permitted him to indulge in extra-conjugal attachments. Indeed Louis was for some years far less audacious than was common: at first he tried to hide his love affairs, though at the last he went beyond all limits of decency. At present he was extraordinarily susceptible to flattery and it was sufficient for him that he should be the centre of splendid ceremonial. With magnificent display Louis was delighted. In the cloths of gold and the royal purples, in the presence of the notabilities of two countries, he manifested his fatuous pleasure. These were wonderful days. By little stages the court proceeded to Paris. Everywhere there were acclamations, everywhere special homage. Paris particularly distinguished itself by its reception on August 26. The royal couple took their places on the

thrones that had been erected at the entrance to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine—where the Grande Mademoiselle, in firing the cannon of the Bastille, had killed her *petit mari*. There were deputations and speeches and processions for hours; and it was not until evening that they reached the Louvre. Looking on at the spectacle—wherein was conspicuous the sumptuous household of Mazarin—were the belle Olympe, the ugly Marie, the witty Henrietta, the one-eyed Madame de Beauvais who had given Louis his first amatory lesson, and Madame Scarron, afterwards Madame de Maintenon—a curious assortment of past, present, and future mistresses. Madame Scarron was strongly impressed by the pomp of it all. She was a poor dependent without hope of improving her situation. Did she dream that she, too, was to be, one day, the wife of Louis—the veritable Queen of France? If she was visited by such a dream she took care not to give expression to ambitions so absurd, but next day she wrote to one of her friends: "I do not believe that anybody could have imagined anything so beautiful as this sight."

Had Mazarin not had the good sense to die not long afterwards, he might have found his position untenable. Louis was chafing under restraint. He could be kept down with difficulty. His head was turned. The fashion of our day is to belittle the estimate that Saint-Simon formed of the character of

the king. I think that Saint-Simon's judgments are well supported. Louis was, says Saint-Simon, less than mediocre, but he loved glory. His education had been neglected, and he spoke of his experiences—when he condescended to speak of himself, for he was exceptionally secretive—with bitterness. He had hardly been taught how to read or to write; and he was so ignorant that he often committed the grossest errors in company. He detested the nobility. He detested *l'esprit.* He demanded flattery, and that flattery could not be too extreme. If anybody wished to give him counsel or convey information, it was necessary to pretend that the king had himself conveyed such information and given such counsel. Already the poison of his youth was working in this manner; and vanity and pride were to be the chief pillars of his greatness.

Yes, it was time for Mazarin to die. This marriage was the crown of his life's work, and after that there could only be decadence. Louis would surely soon become unmanageable. Mazarin settled his affairs and on March 9, 1661, disappeared from the scene, leaving a larger fortune than had ever been accumulated by a minister and having married all his nieces, with rich dowers, to princes and dukes and counts and the constable of the Papal States. It is true that he gave a few pensions to men of letters—to Descartes, to Mézeray, and others. He brought together valuable pictures, statues, books. He introduced Italian

THE QUEEN MARIE-THÉRÈSE, FROM AN OLD PRINT

opera into France. He founded an academy, and a college, and a library. But these things are as nothing beside his unparalleled peculations, and the evils which he brought by his personal struggle for personal power. Just before his death he was stricken with remorse. For the first time in his life he had scruples of conscience. He proposed to make a donation to the king of his immense fortune. It was not really a donation but a restitution. Louis, his ward, could hardly do otherwise than decline the gift—which was exactly what Mazarin had expected. Thus the acquisitions of Mazarin were preserved for his family.

There was no rupture between the king and Mazarin. As the cardinal lay adying he instructed Louis in the politics of the realm, and endeavoured to consolidate the administration. The Chancellor Séguier was Minister of Justice; Le Tellier, Minister of War; Lyonne was entrusted with foreign affairs, and Fouquet with finances.

The next day Louis called together his council. To whom, they asked, should his ministers address themselves in future? "To me," replied the king. "I have convoked you to declare that I have allowed my affairs to be governed by the late cardinal; but that in future I intend to govern myself. You will aid me by your counsels when I ask you for them."

There was consternation. There might well be. Hitherto the king had been, save on ceremonial occa-

sions, a nonentity. Now this ignoramus of twenty-two years pretended to the succession of the skilled and experienced cardinal. It is impossible to suppose that he could have assumed the responsibilities of state with such apparent serenity, had he not been amazingly stupid, or had he not been afraid of trusting himself in a subordinate position. Ignorant Louis was, but not to this extent. Foolish he was, but not in this degree. Conceited he was, but not to this point. His conduct is inexplicable except on the hypothesis that, conscious of his weakness, he felt he could only save his dignity by professing unusual strength. If he relied on anybody he was lost.

There were two fortunes that Mazarin left. One was apparent, the other was hidden. Fouquet said nothing about the millions in gold concealed in fortresses. But Colbert revealed these occult riches, and the king, while leaving to the cardinal's family the apparent fortune, seized the hidden fortune, and instantly became one of the richest kings in Europe.

Henceforward Louis was veritably King of France. His conception of royal power was extraordinary. It would have been startling that any prince, carefully prepared for rulership, should have established absolute monarchy. It is almost incredible that untrained Louis should have boldly asserted his mastery. He had been fond of fêtes: he had amused himself: he had shown some love of military expeditions. But his

understanding of his functions was nil. At this time, as his portraits show, he was an ordinary young man, physically well-made, with brown hair, a fine complexion, an unpleasant mouth betokening sensuality, without any marks of distinction. Later, he set down his doctrines, but they must be regarded as afterthoughts. According to them he considered himself the lord not only of his subjects but of their land and their goods. He claimed unlimited authority. He was, under God, the greatest power on earth. Yet he was not unconscious of his duties. He was prepared to work regularly. His officials, who sniggered at his pretensions, were to keep constantly in touch with him, to report directly to him, to let nothing interfere with the fulfilment of their duties. In his Memoirs he states that kings ought to consider the welfare of their subjects—and doubtless he supposed that he studied their welfare in adding to his personal glory, which was the single aim of his long career.

For fifty-four years he effectively governed, and altogether he reigned for seventy-two years, during which time, as Victor Hugo says, he saw come and go eight popes, five sultans, three emperors, two kings of Spain, three kings of Portugal, four kings and a queen of England, three kings of Denmark, a queen and two kings of Sweden, four kings of Poland, and four czars of Russia. This long reign was filled with splendour and with shame.

In Michelet there is an illuminating sentence: "With his air of self-sufficiency he depended much on opinion, and he followed that of his entourage." This is a strictly accurate description of the king. Historians have pondered over the sudden change in Louis —his transformation from an awkward bashful youth into an authoritative sovereign; and they have been unable to supply a satisfactory explanation. M. Louis Bertrand suggests, in spite of Saint-Simon, that he was exceptionally clever, hiding his light under a bushel until the proper moment came for him to assert himself. This statement cannot be taken seriously. Saint-Simon is accused of bias; but no impartial reader of Saint-Simon can doubt the substantial truth of his appreciations. On a number of points we are entitled to pit our own opinion against that of the contemporary observer; for in the realm of psychology it is permissible for all of us to draw deductions, according to our degree of understanding. But to challenge Saint-Simon's general judgment is a vain undertaking. He remains the great authority on Louis and his court; subject to correction here and there, but nevertheless surprisingly accurate when tested on his facts or on his insight. We must go back to him again and again, taking him as the standard chronicler of the age.

Apart, then, from a few remarks of Mazarin which astonished his hearers, and may have been ironical or paradoxical or exaggerated tributes to an unusual

momentary gleam of intelligence, everything points to the verdict that Louis was neither well endowed by nature nor developed by education. He put on authority as a dress to cover his nudity. He adopted high heels and a high peruke to increase his stature, and in like manner he affected arrogance to increase his moral stature.

Behind this arrogance there were always to be caught glimpses of his discouraged and unhappy childhood, and his very assumption of an impervious front betrayed a consciousness of his need. Louis was always afraid of an encroachment on his personality. He was always seeking little external triumphs. His ambition was directed not so much towards accomplishment as towards recognition. We particularly see this in his military campaigns. They were generally spectacular but without result. He would besiege a town—a safe method of warfare which, with Vauban's engineering genius, was sure to bring success —and when he had taken it he would not trouble to hold it: it was only popular acclaim that he desired. When it came to a pitched battle, whose issue was necessarily doubtful, Louis quickly returned to Paris: the risks of failure and humiliation were too great. Louis's purpose was to set himself on a pedestal above his fellows; and everything he did is an unconscious reflection of his earlier lot.

It was Louis who insisted on court etiquette. He

had no friends. Apart from his mistresses nobody was ever admitted into his intimacy. He called for the most ceremonious observance of the existing regulations which he gradually multiplied. When he rose in the morning his bedroom was filled with members of his family who were there to do him homage, and then came the noblemen of the household to watch him put on his garments. Stage by stage, in order of rank, others were admitted. To put on a shirt was a solemn performance, and the daily task of thrusting royal legs into royal breeches was regarded with awe. Court life has often been described. "Whoever considers," writes La Bruyère, "that the visage of the Prince makes the felicity of the courtier, and that he spends all his life in endeavouring to gaze upon it, will understand how the vision of God is the happiness of saints." And again Primi Visconti remarks that the desire of the courtiers to be noticed is unbelievable: when the king deigned to look in the direction of one of them, that person considered his fortune made and went about boasting to his companions: "The king has looked at me!" The courtiers, as M. Funck-Brentano points out, passed the greater part of their existence on their legs in the royal antechamber. In the salons it was impossible for them to circulate freely. Even those of the highest rank were caught in the crowd and unable to advance. The heat was unbearable, the confusion was incredible. And

LOUIS AND MARIE-THÉRÈSE RECEIVE HOMAGE AT PARIS, FROM AN OLD ENGRAVING

the nobility, badly lodged, often in mere garrets, like servants, sacrificed everything, comfort, dignity, independence, to this wretched life of the court. They deserted their country estates; and to return to a nobler, freer life was, for them, disgrace. Their fortune was in the court. There they sought offices and honours. They lived on the royal bounty, they became the slaves of royalty.

This miserable existence was for ten thousand people the ideal life. No wonder that the king, fed upon incessant flattery, puffed himself up with ridiculous pride. No praise could be too grotesque for him. He swallowed with avidity the most foolish epithets. It is hard, when one reads the sermons, the addresses, the dedications of the time, in which the incomparable qualities of a unique monarch are exalted, to maintain respect for the intelligence of Louis. Those who represent him as an intellectual monarch display the credulity of all historians with a thesis. Nobody of exceptional capacity could have tolerated this perpetual incense. Louis must have been a little less than normal. He must have been slightly below the average level to have listened to these eulogies. The only kind of men who could have tolerated them would be dull unimaginative humourless men, and demi-gods truly conscious of their superiority. Louis was not in the second class. He was certainly in the

first, and wished to be protected against his consciousness of inferiority.

There were plenty of scurrilous pamphlets of satirical chansons, published against the king. They may be dismissed as prejudiced. But our judgment is helped by the writings of Ambassadors to the Court of France. Against the silly interminable monotonous innumerable panegyrics we have only to put the judgment of Spanheim, who was ambassador at Paris. In his Memoirs he notes that the "genius" of the king was naturally limited, was poorly cultivated. If he advanced from the condition of mediocrity of his birth and education, it was because of the successes that were registered in his reign. The art of government in him was not created by reflection but was the result of happy conjunctions and habits. In affairs of the gravest importance Louis was content with the most superficial knowledge. If a minister had his confidence (as had Colbert), it was easy to guide him in the desired direction. But then it was equally easy to guide him in the opposite sense. Thus the red-faced apoplectic Louvois could lead him into wars and destroy the solid work of the dark austere Colbert.

It would never do, however, to let the king suppose that he was being led by anyone of real ability. Spanheim remarks—and this phrase bears out our reading of Louis's character—that he was jealous of anything

or anybody that might compete with his own grandeur, power or merit, or become the object of the esteem and veneration of the public. His aversion was often hidden but it was real; counsellors had to be, or pretend to be, efficient subordinates—and no more.

The public interest was for him synonymous with his own grandeur. "After all, if he has enough talent to comprehend the grand affairs of State, he does not sufficiently occupy himself with their direction. He does not look at them in their various aspects. The assiduity that he displays in the Council, and his application, are limited to the production of an interested or doctored report . . . Jealous in the highest degree of his authority, sensitive beyond all measure to all that can wound his authority, he will easily accept advice which will sustain that authority. Even his liberality is determined by ostentation. There is profusion where there should be economy, and miserliness where expenditure would be useful." Thus enormous sums are spent from the beginning of his reign on the construction of Versailles, while, Spanheim notes, the French people lived in the utmost indigence. The egotism of Louis is the cause of the "wars of magnificence." Of his mismanagement of diplomacy students of history must be convinced. When he had allies he lost them by his own folly—*la folie des*

grandeurs—and time after time he found Europe against him when Europe should have been for him.

These remarks apply to the whole of his reign. His faults increased as he grew older. But the portrait is a sound portrait of Louis as a young man. In essentials he did not change. Physically he was, in his way, not unhandsome. He had a certain slow natural dignity and though his face was pitted with smallpox and a nasal affliction made him (as La Montespan later maliciously remarked) evil-smelling, his air was superb. He paid great attention to his dress. He was vigilant in observing the presence or absence of his courtiers. He had a strict time-table which could not be broken with impunity. After the *lever*, the mass; and after the mass, the council; and after the council, the ceremonious repast attended by soldiers and functionaries and the aristocracy, who stood in their proper places about the table where the king ate alone; and after the repast, the hunt, the details of which were carefully arranged; and after the hunt, the private meetings with his mistress; and then the public supper; and finally the stage-managed *coucher* in the presence of hundreds of people. How could a sensible man have had any feeling but that of contempt for the fawning courtiers who longed as the greatest favour, for the privilege of holding his nocturnal candlestick? Even natural functions were performed publicly—at least nominally, for chroniclers tell us

that he behaved on these occasions with *honnêteté*—a word which we may translate in this connection as discretion. Nobody who was truly superior could have behaved as Louis behaved: nobody who did not possess a fear of inferiority could have behaved as he behaved.

Chapter Eight

FOUQUET AND COLBERT

THERE was one superior man in France who did not understand the workings of the king's mind. He was generally clever but in his dealings with the king he was stupid. He thought that he could dazzle the king by his splendour. That was the sure path of self-destruction. Fouquet was a scoundrel, and he was a scoundrel of genius. Colbert was (relatively) an honest man, though he performed many offices that were disgraceful; but he was, in his humbler way, wiser than Fouquet. Colbert tried to efface himself, to play the lackey. Fouquet tried to carry it off with a high hand, and in doing so offended the monarch who could not brook any manifestation of supériority. Louis has himself shown us why he detested Fouquet. "The insolent acquisitions which he had made, the extravagance of his luxury, his immorality, convinced me of the unruliness of his ambition." But Mazarin had made still more insolent acquisitions. His luxury had been still more extravagant. The immorality of Louis was without bounds, and there was now no servant-

girl who could not catch his passing fancy. But Mazarin had been his master. Fouquet should not be. It was his "unruly ambition" that troubled the king. Fouquet dared to be a rival.

Fouquet was descended from Breton shipowners. He had something of the adventurous spirit of the hardy pirates of his race. He realized that administration in those days meant exploitation; and he exploited on the largest possible scale. He stole prodigiously. As superintendent of finance he had ample opportunity. To maintain his position, which was never very strong even under Mazarin, he had to spend money like water. His agents were everywhere. The nobles were indebted to him. The whole system of finances was made to depend upon him. The collectors of taxes retained a large percentage of the money which they squeezed out of the people; and meanwhile the state was poor and had to resort to various ruinous devices. Fouquet actually obtained money on his personal credit which could not be obtained on the credit of the state. He lent to the king as a private person, and reimbursed himself as superintendent of finance. He confounded his own money with that of the king. One operation will serve as an example of Fouquet's methods. Four hundred thousand livres of rentes were emitted. At a proper rate they represented a capital of 7,200,000 livres. But the king kept for himself half the rentes with-

out payment, and the capital to be furnished therefore fell to 3,600,000 livres. The financiers who placed the loan made such exorbitant charges that the capital again fell to 1,200,000 livres. These rentes were pledged on the taxes, and the collection of them absorbed a third of the sum received. Thus the capital sunk to 800,000 livres. Nevertheless 400,000 livres of rentes were nominally emitted at the price of 7,200,000 livres; and the government, by an ordinance, discharged the treasury of 6,000,000 livres.

Thus were the French finances dilapidated. But Fouquet enriched himself, and he built the wonderful château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, near Melun. It was a magnificent domain. The greatest French artists had contributed to its realization. The fêtes that Fouquet gave were sumptuous in the extreme. He entertained hundreds of persons in these rooms, whose walls were hung with precious tapestries, and whose floors were covered with precious carpets. There was a service of massive gold. In comparison with Fouquet the king was poor. The money which Fouquet lavishly offered the king was accepted but Louis was, like most recipients of favours who are not sure of themselves, incensed against his benefactor. Finally the ill-advised man invited the king to Vaux-le-Vicomte, whose construction had occasioned the demolition of three villages. No more fatal move could have been conceived. Louis was beside himself with rage.

Fouquet was guilty of lèse-majesté in entertaining the king far better than the king could have entertained him. The panorama of clipped trees in the park, the artificial cascades, the exquisitely arranged flower-beds, the trimmed lawns, the marble basins, the jets of water falling over tritons and dolphins, the rain of artificial fire in the grand gardens, the ballets by the fountains, set Louis furiously thinking. There was a mountain of sweetmeats, moved by ingenious mechanism. Food was served on golden platters. There was mysterious soft music. There were thousands of lights where light should be, and dusk where dusk ministered to pleasure.

After the dinner of six thousand persons Molière presented his play *Les Fâcheux*. In a prologue which Fouquet caused to be written, the justice of the king was impudently extolled. This was a challenge to Louis; and Louis felt it as such. In his anger he wanted to have Fouquet arrested on the spot; and only the dissuasion of Anne of Austria prevented this dramatic dénouement. But there were other diversions at Vaux. There the affectionate and shrinking Louise de La Vallière was again placed in the path of the king. Doubtless this was a cunning device of Fouquet. But Fouquet overreached himself. He foresaw that the king would fall in love with La Vallière, and he hoped to place himself in her good graces.

Alas! the king believed that in love, as in wealth, Fouquet was his rival.

The injured king, with maliciousness of a kind that is erroneously attributed exclusively to women, in taking leave of Fouquet remarked: "I can never dare to receive you under my roof: you would be too badly housed." He went away brooding over all he had seen; and Versailles was, from that moment, conceived on the model of Vaux.

Particularly had he been struck with the evidences of Fouquet's "unruly ambition." Quo non ascendam? That was Fouquet's motto inscribed everywhere. To what heights would he not mount? His very name was a punning menace; and in his arms appeared a climbing squirrel—a fouquet.

Fouquet had assumed royal prerogatives. He was the friend and patron of artists. Notably he aided the charming La Fontaine. Polite society was not insensible to elegant poetry. The classic age in which harmony, grace, and order took precedence over more robust merit was beginning. But La Fontaine was simple and natural. His verses were often frivolous but the versification was easy and musical, and he showed that it was not necessary to be heroic, in the style of Corneille, to be noble, or grotesque in the style of Scarron, to be comic. He was picturesque, lovable, diverse. Such was the man discovered by Fouquet, who provided him with a pension and drew him into

his social world. La Fontaine, in a period when ingratitude was a virtue, remained devoted to Fouquet after the fall of the financier.

The incorruptible Colbert persisted in undermining the position of Fouquet—a mole quietly working under the tree in which climbed Fouquet. His tactics were to irritate the king against the superintendent. He reported that the financier had fortified Belle Isle, an island off the coast of Brittany, and was prepared to hold it against the king. It would have been quite impossible for Fouquet to defend himself in Belle Isle or elsewhere. If Louis decided on his overthrow, then he was lost. He could not fly, for no country in the world would have protected him. He could only trust that the king would consider him indispensable. And he offered Louis a million, which Louis accepted, somewhat treacherously, with assurances of friendship.

Shortly after the fête in the château that Le Vau designed and Le Brun decorated, Fouquet was arrested on the king's order by the Captain of Musketeers, d'Artagnan. Louis behaved with strange deceitfulness. He had set out amicably with Fouquet on a tour of inspection in Brittany; and only when they were at Nantes did the blow fall. "I believed I was as well liked as anybody by the king," sadly remarked Fouquet, surprised that his attentions had acted against his interests. Once he was in custody, nothing could save

him. Among his papers were some foolish plans of war, and oaths of fidelity of various persons to him. Fouquet asserted that these papers were old. The provisional plan was originally drawn up against Mazarin.

The incorruptible Colbert quietly poisoned the spirit of the king against the man whose place he coveted. The proceedings against Fouquet were marked by many irregularities. At last, after considerable delay, Parliament banished Fouquet from the kingdom. The sentence was not too harsh. Fouquet could go anywhere outside France and build another Vaux. But Colbert was vigilant and implacable. He had striven for the death penalty. It could not now be applied, but it was in the power of the king to commute the theoretically terrible sentence of banishment into a perpetual detention on French soil. This he was persuaded to do. So Fouquet was sent to the cruel prison of Pignerol where he remained until his death nineteen years later. Louis showed an unworthy severity, at the outset of his reign, towards the man who aspired to be his rival in magnificence, though undoubtedly Fouquet deserved his punishment. The way was now clear for further assertions of personal power.

Jean-Baptiste Colbert who had stimulated the jealousy of the king against Fouquet found himself at the head of several ministries. Chiefly he was in charge

of finance, but he also directed public works, agriculture, commerce, fine arts, and the royal household. To these charges was added, a few years later, that of the marine.

The character of Colbert is not as simple as it is often represented to be. Honesty is a relative term. Coming from a family of merchants he cultivated a kind of commercial rectitude: that is to say, he did not seek to enrich himself in ways that could not be justified by reference to his bookkeeping accounts; but when it suited his purpose he could deliberately close his eyes to the improper practices of others. When he was the servant of Mazarin he faithfully manipulated the stolen money of his master. None of it stuck to his own fingers. He was punctilious himself, and the irregularities of his master did not concern him. It was for him to display probity in dealing with the fruits of improbity.

He rose because he could be trusted to carry out orders without inquiring too nicely into the character of those orders. Nobody could be more scrupulous than Colbert, but he was nevertheless without conscience. Just as he distinguished himself by his zeal for Mazarin, so did he distinguish himself by his zeal for the king. He was not only the Minister of Finance; he was, on occasion, the minister to Louis's pleasures. One might apply hard names to Colbert. But perhaps he does not deserve them. It is impossi-

ble to practice all the virtues at the same time. It is impossible to be an excellent lackey and an independent person. Colbert had to choose, and the choice was not difficult for him. He was by nature a subordinate. It was not for him to ask questions. He did not question Mazarin's financial methods; and afterwards he would not question Louis's morals but was quite content to arrange for the accouchement of Louis's mistress, and to steal away at midnight with a newborn child under his cloak.

But this subservience which made Colbert capable of despicable pandering, of being the willing accomplice of ignoble acts in the fulfilment of his duty, did not prevent him from being ambitious. Ambitious he was in a cold and mean manner. If he could cover up the vices of those to whom he owed allegiance, he was not obliged to cover up the crimes of those who were in competition with him for the graces of the king. To Fouquet he owed nothing, and he sought his place by tale-telling. In that place he showed himself to be remarkably efficient. Incidentally he enriched himself and his family, but he earned his fortune legitimately. He was grave and hard. For twenty-two years he practised the precept which he gave to his son: "You ask me whether it is better to work in the evening or in the morning. It is necessary to work in the evening *and* in the morning." In appearance he was forbidding. He had a naturally

frowning countenance. His eyes were deep-set under thick dark eyebrows. He was, says a contemporary, alert and extraordinarily constant, convinced that good faith is the surest basis of policy. (But first choose well the person to whom to be constant, to whom to keep good faith.) Infinite application and a capacity for learning replaced profundity. His mind was solid and was fitted especially for calculation. He pored over his perplexing accounts. He tried within certain limits to guide the king aright. He would save a single *écu* when it could be saved, and spend millions when the glory of Louis and the state called for extravagance. In one of his papers he records that a feast without utility caused him great pain but millions of gold for the prosecution of a war, though generally he was pacific, did not disturb him. The red-faced apoplectic Louvois, who succeeded as War Minister, was a bad counsellor of the king, always urging him to begin fresh expeditions; and Colbert deprecated these counsels. But it would be completely untrue to set Louvois and Colbert in direct opposition. Certainly Colbert saw his schemes wrecked by war, but he did not therefore protest with unbecoming vigour. He was the faithful servant, not the maker of policy. Never did he approach the stature of a Richelieu or even of a Mazarin. Doubtless he would not have been permitted to assume control, but he might nevertheless have tried more strenuously to protect and preserve

his own work. He accomplished much. He plodded and persevered, not in one department but in many. But there was always lacking a general scheme.

The confidence of Louis was quickly captured. Colbert gave to Louis more gold than he had ever imagined would be his. Colbert persuaded Louis that the true author of his labours was Louis himself. He submitted to the king carefully arranged figures, summary calculations which the king could understand, and the king believed himself to be almost his own finance minister. Undoubtedly Colbert transformed French finances. There is a note that he prepared for the king revealing that in September 1661 the revenue had been anticipated for two years; whereas in December 1662, the revenue had increased by fifty millions. At the earlier date the king paid twenty millions in interest. At the later date nothing. The king could at first spend no unusual sum without the aid of the financiers, but in a short time, in spite of the purchase of Dunkirk, he was so rich that he could have bought up other towns if he had wished.

The fleet had been ruined: there were now more than a score of new vessels built, and others being built, for the protection of the merchant marine. The ministers and the nobles had been the patrons of art and the possessors of luxury: now the king was pre-eminent in this respect. The king who could spend

nothing on his palaces had now funds for their embellishment and could begin to erect Versailles.

The nobility was not always noble. Many so-called nobles had usurped their titles, or at least had invented for themselves feudal rights which did not belong to them. They had seized innumerable offices, financial, municipal, judicial. They had annexed the church, placing members of their family in well-paid ecclesiastical posts. They escaped taxation, so that the burden fell upon the people. There was, in many parts of the country, no legal authority not turned to the advantage of the seigneurs, who placed themselves above the law. All this Colbert proposed to alter, and he partly succeeded.

There was no budget. Expenditure was quite unregulated by receipts. It was Colbert who drew up the first proper French budget. On one side was the statement of the expected revenue. On the other side was the statement of the probable expenditure. This was the *état de prévoyance*. Colbert, with the approval of the king, made the money-lenders who had cheated the state repay their ill-gotten gains. Instead of redeeming rentes which had not profited the treasury, Colbert cancelled them. More than a hundred millions were thus recovered. Letters of nobility which had been acquired improperly in the last few decades were simply revoked, and therefore, with this weeding out of the nobility, many thousands of fami-

lies who had assumed privileges enabling them to escape taxation, were again placed on the footing of commoners. The *taille*, or direct taxation on real property, was extended. But it was also reduced; for Colbert preferred indirect taxes—that is to say, *aides*—payable on commodities by everybody. It is curious that in our time direct taxation should be considered more democratic than indirect taxation. The French tradition since Colbert has leaned towards indirect taxation as more equitable. Certainly indirect taxes cannot be evaded. They are easily collected. Thus while Colbert reduced the *taille* from fifty-three million livres to thirty-two million livres, he raised the *aides* from a million and a half to twenty-one millions. Moreover he reduced the tax on salt, the hated gabelle, and made up for this loss by taxes on such luxuries as tobacco, coffee, playing-cards, wine, lotteries. Loans he discouraged, for he knew that they meant extravagant expenditure. A country that does not live on its income is doomed to financial chaos. Some loans indeed were necessary, but as far as possible Colbert eliminated the large financiers who were extortionate and asked the smaller capitalists to place their money in state investments.

Colbert was never popular. Yet it cannot be doubted that had it depended on him he would have relieved the lot of the people. He made many mistakes, but he had a sense of order and of justice. The

centralized administration which Richelieu had instituted was consolidated by the minister of Louis. Alfred Rambaud, one of the most painstaking historians of France, has pointed out the infinite variety of the laws and customs which existed when Colbert took control. Colbert induced Louis to reform the codes. The king presided over the conferences, at which were present the Chancellor Séguier, Le Tellier, Lyonne, counsellors of state, advocates, and Colbert himself. The preliminary work was accomplished, and it was then submitted to a larger assembly of magistrates. There was a battle between those who would maintain the old usages and those who supported ideas of progress and of uniformity. A civil code—or rather a code of civil procedure—was fashioned on these deliberations. It was insufficient; it was chiefly intended to suppress abuses which had sprung up, and to prescribe formalities, and to reduce delay, and to establish the hierarchy of the tribunals, but limited as it was, it abolished many iniquities. This work is worthy of being compared—in spite of its defects—with that of Napoleon in the same domain.

Then came the criminal code. Of this less can be said. It did away with various abuses, but it left others. Barbarous practices persisted for many years. Accused persons were denied defenders. The prepara-

tion of cases was secretly conducted. The terrible galleys were used as prisons.

The true claim of Colbert to the gratitude of the French people is perhaps his establishment of a commercial code. Many of the dispositions which he laid down are those of today. There are black spots, especially in the colonial code, which sanctioned a wicked system of slavery. It would be facile enough to criticize the legislative work of Colbert; but we must remember that however horrible from our point of view were many of the practices endorsed by Louis and Colbert, they were an improvement on the existing practices. In agriculture and in industry Colbert strove according to his lights. We can only summarize here the chief measures. He encouraged the breeding of cattle; stud horses were imported, as were better varieties of sheep; and bounties were accorded. Marshes were drained, rivers and forests were placed under jurisdiction. Unhappily Colbert fell into the fallacy of prohibiting the export of corn, believing that this was a means of preventing scarcity and famine. It does not require much consideration to perceive that the restriction of the market for corn must ultimately injure agriculture, and the blunder of Colbert subsequently cost France dear. Already the struggle between agriculture and industry was beginning, and as Colbert increased commerce he prejudiced agriculture. The more men were drawn into

factories, the fewer there were to till the soil. Colbert shifted the balance on the side of industry, just as Sully had shifted the balance on the side of agriculture. His policy was immediately successful, but in the long run it produced want; and the rural inhabitants of France under the *ancien régime* suffered terribly. The peasant, on the lowest rung of the social ladder, was particularly unhappy. The stronger became France, with great armies, great fleets, splendid victories on land and sea, brilliant treaties, magnificent palaces, and scintillating courts, the heavier the burden on the peasant on whose back all this rested. Colbert interested himself in the situation of the countryfolk. He would not have their cattle seized for non-payment of taxes. He recommended moderation to his intendants. He did what he could, but it was little enough. The beginning of the personal reign of Louis XIV was relatively prosperous for the countryside, but the peasants in various parts were already nourishing themselves on grass, on nettles, on roots. Their houses were often mere huts of mud and straw. Their clothes were rags. Matters did not mend. They grew worse until, in the declining days of Louis, Fénelon dared to write to the king; "Your people die of hunger. The cultivation of the earth is almost abandoned."

Colbert's attention was turned to industry. He was essentially a bourgeois—that is to say, a trader. His

dominant idea was that France lacked industries and he tried to supply them. All kinds of stuffs had hitherto come from Italy: henceforward tissues should come from Lyons, which became the centre of silk-making. Steel had come from England: France learnt the secret of steel-making and brought in English workers. Germany manufactured tin: German tin-workers were induced to enter France. Venetian glass had an incomparable reputation: therefore Italian immigrants were welcomed in Normandy and Picardy. Lace also came from abroad: Colbert set up workshops at Arras, Sedan, Château-Thierry, Alençon, and many other places; while at Rheims, foreign lace-workers were put under the supervision of Marie Colbert, the sister of the minister. It was Colbert, too, who stimulated the production of tapestry at the Gobelins, the Savonnerie, Beauvais, Aubusson, and so forth. Marseilles made soap; Abbeville, Louviers, and Elbeuf made cloth. Sweden taught France how to exploit copper, lead, and coal mines. In Brittany linen was woven. At Nevers faïence was manufactured. Many of these industries flourished because of the employment of foreign workers, but Colbert illogically refused to allow French workers to carry their craftsmanship into other countries, and took severe measures against such emigration. Not always were the towns in which factories were established grateful to Colbert. On the contrary, they protested

against the introduction of new trades and foreign workers. Thereupon Colbert gave them subsidies, and called his factories *manufactures royales.* He gave them privileges—local monopolies—which ruined private industries. Many of his enterprises yielded poor results, costing more than they were worth. Finally the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes drove the Protestants, the most industrious and skilful part of the population, from France. Louis's oppression of the Calvinists, many of whom had come to France on the promises of Colbert, was as destructive of French prosperity as were his wars.

The organization of the various corporations was excessive. They were extremely jealous, and any amelioration was denounced as injurious to others. There was a long list of what this worker could do, and that worker could not do. Colbert did not change the complicated rules—except to reinforce them—and surveillance and protection were carried to extremes. The conditions of apprenticeship and of artisanry were laid down with rigorous precision. The doors, as Colbert said, were closed to the incompetent: they were also closed to innovators. Fines were imposed upon those who tried to introduce new methods. Work that did not conform to the regulations was exhibited on a pole, with placards announcing the name of the manufacturer who had committed the heinous fault, and the goods were torn, burnt, or confiscated.

It is curious that this same Colbert should write that the best can only be produced by *laissez faire*. He was aware that there could be no genuine industrial progress without liberty; but in practice he perpetually imposed restrictions.

Riquet, Baron de Bonrepos, constructed, under the orders of Colbert, the remarkable Canal du Midi, linking up the Atlantic with the Mediterranean. This was an extraordinary feat, and it was the beginning of the wonderful system of waterways which France possesses. Riquet also constructed the canal from Saint-Omer to Calais, and planned to connect the Somme with the Oise, and designed the canals of Charollais, of the Centre, and of Burgundy. Rivers were rendered navigable. Toll-houses were reduced and communications in the interior thus facilitated. Roads were repaired and new highways built. Colbert induced Louis to preside over a Council of Commerce which met every fortnight.

While Sully had feebly proposed a system of free trade, Colbert was an impenitent protectionist. Protection, he said, constituted the crutches of French industry. But foreign countries naturally retaliated, and the war of tariffs eventually resulted in a rupture of relations with Holland and the invasion of that country. French goods were prohibited in the Papal States. The English at one time stopped all commerce with France. It was all very well to keep out foreign

importations, but French exportations naturally suffered in their turn. Nevertheless Colbert, seconded by Vauban, reconstructed a merchant marine that might compete with those of Holland and of England; and he rebuilt Toulon, Havre, Calais, Brest, Rochefort. He had no systematic colonial policy but was inspired by circumstances. France possessed Canada, and some of the Antilles, and had a footing in Madagascar and the Indies. Colbert bought Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other islands; sent colonists to Cayenne; began the occupation of Louisiana and Newfoundland; protected Saint-Domingo, and enabled the Indian Company to establish itself at Chandernagor and Pondicherry. He took parts of Senegal from the Dutch. Altogether he greatly developed French colonies, though they were later lost. In accordance with his usual method he closed colonial ports to foreign vessels, alienating various countries, and increasing the difficulties of France in the wars which were undertaken by Louis.

The navy numbered thirty ships in 1661. In 1683 it numbered 176. Still ten years later it had risen to over 360 ships all told. Recruiting methods were vastly improved. Schools of gunnery and hydrography were established. Colbert may be regarded as the founder of the French navy but, except for a brief period, France made poor use of her fleet.

Colbert has certainly left his mark on French in-

stitutions. He has left his mark on French thought. But he made (as did his master) the same mistake in intellectual life as in industrial life. He tried to destroy initiative. He tried to turn out his countrymen to pattern. Literature, science, art, music, architecture, were "academized" by him. But the foundations of Colbert did not altogether suppress genius; Molière and Racine and many others composed masterpieces in spite of Louis and Colbert. To be sure, they and others who shared the liberalities of Louis wrote panegyrics of the king, and for insignificant pensions the fame of Louis was spread throughout Europe. It was an excellent bargain for the king. It was certainly less expensive to pay one hundred thousand livres a year to be praised by the best spirits of the time than to indulge in devastating military exploits. Louis did both, but he expected his expensive wars to be the raw material of cheap literary adulation.

Chapter Nine

LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE

MADAME was Henrietta, sister of Charles II of England. Monsieur was Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, brother of the king. It was an excellent diplomatic move to marry them. France and England were thus closely linked together. But from the point of view of personal happiness a worse match could not have been made.

The marriage took place less than a month after the death of Mazarin. Henrietta had been brought up in France. She was French in spirit. She was lively, intelligent, beautiful. Of all the women who attracted the king she was in every respect by far the most desirable. With all her faults she was essentially good. When she was witty she was not malicious; her verbal brilliance did not exclude sympathy.

She was different from the other women of the king—different from the superb sensual Olympe, the romantic Marie, the heavy Marie-Thérèse. Henrietta was only eighteen, but she had a long experience of life. A cannon was her cradle. She was taken

from the vicissitudes of the English revolution and plunged into the vicissitudes of the French revolution known as the Fronde.

In her ears was the noise of battles. Her father was beheaded. Her mother suffered poverty, and she with her mother. Affection is bred of adversity, and with her brothers, Charles and James, she was on the most affectionate terms. When Charles II became King of England there was question of her marriage with Louis. But Louis disdained this frail thin girl. "I do not care for the little bones of the Holy Innocents," he said.

In the convent—gallant and political, as were many convents of the time—in which she was brought up, it was hoped that she would convert England to Catholicism. How? By marrying the brother of the French king, and by exerting her influence over the English king. The Protestantism of Charles II was never profound; and it might be she could work upon her brother who was partly dependent on the French court.

Who was Monsieur? He was not unlike certain earlier kings of France. He cared little for women. His liking for petticoats was of another kind: he preferred to wear them himself. He painted and powdered. Madame pleased him well enough as a companion, but he was jealous of her. She must not rob him of his men friends—of Guiche and others.

He did not mind overmuch that she should please his companions: it was excellent that she should have a splendid court. Should the king fall in love with her, Monsieur would resign himself. It would be easier to obtain favours from the king.

When, in fact, at Fontainebleau, Louis became devoted to Madame, Philippe saw his wife as the true Queen of France. Everything revolved around her. The king danced for her, hunted for her, prepared fêtes for her. The calculations of the religious and political inmates of the convent of Chaillot were being fulfilled. The pale Henrietta, abandoned by her effeminate husband, was not displeased. Michelet is inclined to think that there was still hope of the marriage of Henrietta and Louis, for the queen was ailing and Philippe could have been bought off. It was certainly annoying that the Comte de Guiche should also be enamoured of her; and there was, besides, the skilful philanderer Vardes. Unfortunately the marriage of Henrietta with Philippe was consummated and she became *enceinte* at the same time that Charles married, by arrangement with Louis XIV, Catherine of Braganza, the Portuguese princess—a union which was meant to embarrass the Spanish king.

Madame de Motteville notes that Louis rejoiced at the birth of the child of Madame. Monsieur went off to amuse himself elsewhere.

Henrietta was tall, still thin, slightly hunchbacked,

one shoulder higher than the other; she coughed frequently and was sometimes shaken with convulsions; she produced on people the impression of one who was marked out for early death. These physical defects somehow made her more attractive. The brooding suggestion of a premature end, the distressing symptoms of delicate health, lent to her a wistful charm, a romantic pathos, a touching mystery; and Henrietta was wooed by English and French gallants.

But it was not the sentiment of pity that was predominant in her lovers. They may have been attracted, and they may have been held, by a dim realization of her fragility: but they were conscious above all of her desire and capacity to please. Her bright dancing eyes, her clear if pale complexion, her shining white teeth in the red of her smiling lips, more than compensated for her imperfections; and she was at all times (as Molière, Bossuet, and Cosnac agree) lovable and "douce." This sweetness captivated women as well as men: she was vivacious, a good conversationalist, ready to go to any trouble to oblige her friends. She sang prettily and played the clavecin. She was at once shrewd and naïve, coquettish and virtuous, pleasure-loving and serious.

At Fontainebleau Louis and Henrietta, both unhappily married, saw each other perpetually during the months of May, June, and July, 1661.

Fête after fête was organized for her; there were

dances, and picnics, and aquatic diversions on the canal, and music and promenades, for her. For her trumpets blew on the galiots and violins shrilled in the moonlight. With her, after supper, the king set off on nocturnal excursions and they remained alone in the arbours of the park and in the secluded glades of the forest throughout the summer nights.

The queen-mother was alarmed at Henrietta's ascendancy. An ordinary scandal was of little importance, but the suggestion of incest was serious. A subterfuge had to be found. That subterfuge was named Louise de La Baume Le Blanc, afterwards Duchesse de La Vallière.

Louise was intended as a mere pretext. The plan was that in order to obtain ready access to the apartments of Henrietta without awakening suspicion, the king should pretend to be in love with one of her ladies of honour. Louise was a modest girl who would never have dared to raise her eyes to the person of the monarch had she not been deliberately placed in his path. She was timid and trembled when a privileged jester declared before the court that she was fond of the king. The king had not even noticed the lady of honour whom he had agreed to regard as his *amante*. But when she blushed and appeared ashamed at the revelation of the supposed secret, Louis deigned to cast his eyes upon her, and he found her acceptable. Then came the fête of Fouquet at Vaux.

The conspirators arranged matters well. Louis and Louise were thrown together. The king grew interested in her. The alleged attentions of Fouquet aroused his anger. He was told that one of the paintings in the salon of Fouquet was the picture of the gentle Louise. That malicious lie accomplished two things—it determined the downfall of Fouquet, and the ascension of Louise. She was certainly not beautiful, though she had a creamy complexion. She was lame. She was heavy-eyed. There was something sad in her expression. She was affectionate but fearful. Altogether she was in striking contrast with the bold, elegant, handsome ladies of the court, and she won the heart of Louis as no one save Marie Mancini had yet done.

Of Louise de La Vallière, who seduced the king because she was a poor simple girl, without pretension, without brilliancy, because she was tremblingly passionate, of plebeian blood, a plaything, a creature to be protected, there is more to say. But let us follow the fortunes of Henrietta. She quickly lost her hold on the king when Louise came into his life. Had she kept her influence the course of history would have been changed, for her advice was often sound whereas Louise was incapable of giving any sort of advice. She had counselled Louis, if he meant to arrest Fouquet, to act without loss of dignity, to arrest him at Paris, not to travel with him to Nantes, there to

behave disloyally. When the king purchased Dunkirk from Charles, she endeavoured to dissuade her brother from committing such a folly, for it was obvious that the King of England would appear, in the eyes of his people, what he was, an agent of France. Her lapses from virtue may be condoned, because her husband placed her in an impossible situation. There were constant intrigues against her, conducted by the bigots who wished to bring the king into subservience to the priests; and the intriguers, devotees, and bigots tried to supply her with lovers who would bring shame upon her. Guiche wrote her amorous letters; at them Henrietta laughed. Then Guiche, inspired by the romances of the period, was brought into her chamber under the disguise of an old fortune-teller. These adventures were related to the king, who scolded Madame. Compromising letters came into the hands of Vardes. She was blackmailed and humiliated. Among all the disgraceful stories of the reign of Louis XIV there is none so disgraceful as the methods by which Madame was terrorized by Vardes and others, and her influence over the king destroyed.

If one thinks of the lovers of Louis, one thinks first of Louise de La Vallière. She makes a peculiar appeal to the imagination. Marie Mancini, Henrietta, La Montespan, are highly picturesque figures; they are more vivid than Louise; they are colourful as she is

not; they commend themselves to our notice in a dozen different ways; and yet it is the colourless, effaced portrait of Louise that hangs in the centre of the gallery. Marie, the Cinderella who audaciously left her kitchen for the salon, who in a rapture of passion was carried to the steps of the throne, Louis's first and—as some say—only love, is attractive; but not so attractive as Louise. Nothing could be richer in hue than the picture of the "adorable" Montespan, possessor of a greater lineage than that of the king himself, extraordinarily beautiful, fascinatingly wicked, so successful that her illegitimate children were the favourites of Louis, and came near to taking precedence over the princes of the blood; and yet the weeping Louise has a superior charm. Madame de Maintenon, a servant half her life, married secretly, at midnight, to the king, is a wonderful subject for a popular pen; and still it is Louise who has far outstripped her sisters in the esteem of the masses. It would be difficult to compile the bibliography of Louise: more books have been written about her than have been written about all the other mistresses of Louis put together. She touches us because she was no courtesan, but on the contrary was always remorseful for having yielded to the king—a frail creature who felt that she sinned in loving, and loved in sinning. She was no adventuress seeking riches and honours for herself and her family—she only asked

to be allowed to bury her shame in a convent, and to redeem her soul by perpetual prayers. Louise is unique among royal mistresses in that she convinces us of her entire disinterestedness, her entire devotion. She really loved Louis, loved him purely, tenderly, with a sense of guilt, yet with the blind beatitude that can only come of love. To her it was incredible that Louis should deign to look at her; it was a miracle that he should choose her for his favours; it was beyond all imagination that her god should descend to her. No legend in mythology, of a divinity taking human shape to visit a simple earth-maiden, could be compared to the story of Louise. Her humbleness before the monarch she worshipped, her modesty when he wooed her, her helpless clingingness when she surrendered, secure for her unquestionably whatever pardon there may be to give, not from us (for it is presumptuous of us to challenge or rebuke her sincere love) but from the higher power who has accorded to mortals the rare gift of love. Even Louis was overawed in her presence: there emanated from her a strange light, a transfiguring light, which abashed the vain king. His timidity with her is amply attested. He was more respectful to her than to others. Once when they were caught in a thunder-storm they took shelter under a tree, and for two hours Louis remained hat in hand, hardly daring to regard the frightened girl.

In his affection for her—for he was, at least in the earlier years, extremely affectionate—there were many elements. There was a kind of astonished delight at being loved for himself—at finding the flattering fiction, so necessary to his well-being, of his superiority, taken seriously by one person. There was the pleasure, constant in Louis, of "creating" something. Louise was nobody: he lifted her up, and on his grace she depended. Throughout his life Louis had a preference, which was at least partly morbid, for humble persons whom he might raise; for poor women to whom he might give the tabouret; for ministers without any qualifications save that they were favoured—and as his reign rolled on the qualifications of ministers grew fewer and fewer, and his rage for "creation" swelled.

At this time Louis was a good-looking young man with—all observers agree—a majestic presence. He was not tall—he added to his stature by high red heels which immediately came into fashion; but he was well-developed and he had a slow, grave, and graceful manner. Large perukes were not yet worn—though they were adopted shortly afterwards—and the king's chestnut hair fell in long curls to his shoulders. His nose was large and well-moulded and his blue eyes burnt quietly. He spoke drawlingly, coldly, and reflectively. What he said was final: it was hard to persuade him to change his opinion. He disliked

witticisms because he was incapable of them himself, but he nevertheless impressed those around him by his air of self-satisfied dignity.

Louise had been introduced into the court of the Duchesse d'Orléans by Madame de Choisy. She was a daughter of a lieutenant of cavalry. Her mother, left a widow, married the Baron de Saint-Rémy, maître d'hôtel of Madame. She was poor and undistinguished by birth. She was not pretty—but her blue eyes had a tender expression. She was lame and tried to hide this disgrace. She had no conversation and could not offend the king by her wit. She was modest and good. Altogether she was a perfectly harmless negligible creature who could safely be chosen—or so it seemed—as a screen for the love-making of Henrietta and Louis.

The Queen Marie-Thérèse did not complain overmuch: she was aware of Louis's attachments, and, on the whole, seems to have accepted them as inevitable. Royal adultery was admitted. Most of the French kings had openly set their mistresses in places of high honour. To them were given titles and tabourets—they were made duchesses, and accorded the privilege of sitting (on a little folding stool) in the presence of the king and the queen. These women had counted greatly in French history. The Duchesse d'Étampes, for example, had extraordinary power as the favourite of François I. Diane de Poitiers, with her hold on

Henri II, reduced even Catherine de Médici to impotence. Henri IV had lived a publicly amorous life, and the descendants of the belle Gabrielle d'Estrées were in the foremost ranks of the French nobility. Indeed, the French aristocracy was recruited from the illegitimate offspring of kings—legitimatized and especially distinguished by marks of royal favour. It was nothing that Louis should contract liaisons. They did not lower him in the eyes of his subjects. On the contrary, he was thought better of as a man. However unhappy Marie-Thérèse may have been, she could not expect fidelity. The most she could expect was that Louis should sometimes share her couch, that she should be enabled to fulfil her queenly functions by bearing children, that she should not be humiliated, that her dignity should be safeguarded, that she should continue to be the highest lady in the land. Louis, in fact, was considerate at the beginning; his love affairs were truly clandestine.

It was rather the queen-mother, Anne of Austria, whose rival in the affections of Louis XIII, Louise de La Fayette, her maid of honour, was then passing her last days in a convent, who betrayed jealousy of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans. She had hoped to make of Henrietta, whom she had befriended, a devoted servant. She saw Henrietta escape from her domination, and with chagrin she saw Henrietta exercise domination over the king. Her animosity was

aroused when she saw Louis at the feet of the sprightly English princess. She tried to excite the amour-propre of Monsieur her son. Besides, though much could be pardoned in that age, incestuous relations were scandalous. Such a scandal had to be prevented. Louis himself realized that he had gone too far. He disliked scandal. The Comte de Guiche, the friend of Monsieur, was making love to Madame and to Louise at the same time. It was a curious intrigue—as the king became more enamoured of Louise, Guiche more and more transferred his attentions to Madame, until, after a stormy scene with Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, Guiche was obliged to leave the court.

The sentimental Louise was an easy prey. She was not ambitious but she was genuinely enamoured of the royal suitor who at first accepted her as he might have accepted any other lady in the entourage of Madame. Everybody was caught in traps of their own devising. Madame lost Louis, and Louis lost Madame, and all those who had assisted in placing Louise in the path of the king were surprised and hurt when the relations of Louise and Louis became serious. At first the king saw La Vallière in the presence of Madame, but presently when La Vallière fell ill—or feigned to be ill—he sought her in her chamber. For some time Anne of Austria continued to suspect Madame. She could not believe that the king could care for anyone who was of relatively lowly birth.

Fête still followed fête and gave opportunities for intrigue. Thus there was at the palace a Ballet des Arts by Benserade and Baptiste in which the king himself played. He was a shepherd. Madame was a shepherdess. So was La Vallière. So too was Mademoiselle de Mortemart, afterwards Marquise de Montespan, who was to succeed La Vallière. It was a continuous amorous chase, a ballet in which the figures advanced and receded and changed partners—a dissolving picture of the court.

Louise was frequently troubled. Thus she learnt of the indiscretions of Madame and Guiche, but pledged her word that she would not reveal them to the king. Yet when he questioned her she was torn between her duty to him and her pledged word. Louis was angry at her silence. She was alarmed. She imagined that all was over and fled precipitately to the convent of Chaillot. They would not admit her into the convent; she remained disconsolate in the parlour, crying, trembling, exhausted. The king learned of her departure by accident at the Louvre. He renounced everything. He broke his time-table. He disregarded etiquette. He sprang on his horse, and, his face hidden in his mantle, he hastened to Chaillot. There he found Louise in agony. She confessed the cause of her emotion. She told him all that she had tried to conceal. He consoled her and insisted that she should return with him to the court.

Neither Monsieur nor Madame would allow La Vallière to resume her service. Then Louis had recourse to blackmail. He told Madame all that he had learned about her conduct. She was indignant. Not in this manner was she to be moved. The king changed his tactics. He wept and pleaded with her. Finally the duchesse was touched and she consented to the return of her rival and her supplanter, La Vallière. The story is at once amusing and shocking. It does not reveal the delicacy of the king. How could he ask Madame, who had been the object of his passion, with whom he had arranged to regard La Vallière as a screen for their relations, to take back the girl who had become his avowed mistress? How could he impose her upon Henrietta? Nor was the position of Louise enviable. There was not only the enmity of Henrietta, of Monsieur, of the queen-mother, of the queen herself, to be feared; but the more perfidious jealousy of Olympe, Comtesse de Soissons, the former mistress of the king, who was now fulfilling intimate functions in the household of the queen, and who had for lover the Comte de Vardes.

Vardes wrote an anonymous letter in which were recounted the amours of the king, and this letter purposely came into the king's hands. Vardes was a detestable person, who gloried in the humiliation of others, and especially of the women to whom he made love. Madame was terrorized at these proceedings,

and appears to have submitted to the insolence of Vardes, who had her in his power. These intrigues, in which everybody was more or less involved, were dangerous for the whole royal family. It was a household divided against itself. The court with its Guiches and Vardes, and Mademoiselle Montalais, and Olympe, presents an amazing picture of frivolity, inconscience, villainy, hypocrisy, cynicism.

For Louise the king wrote verses. He showed them to the Maréchal de Grammont, soliciting his opinion. "Abominable, Sire, abominable," pronounced the courtier, pulling a wry face. Curiously, whenever we find a courtier speaking frankly to Louis, we find Louis receiving the verdict without complaint. He demanded flattery, but those who did not trouble to flatter he respected. "Your frankness has cured me," he told Grammont. "I shall write no more verses." Dangeau wrote them for him—at one time as many as three a day. La Vallière could not keep up this pace—so Dangeau wrote *her* letters too. Long afterwards he confessed to the king that not only were Louis's letters his, but Louise's also; and the king laughed heartily.

Louis was never the mighty monarch, indifferent to public opinion, that he has been represented to be. He was vain and ostentatious; and that is a proof of his weakness rather than of his strength. He was often guilty of a foolish display of authority; as are

all men who are not sure of themselves. One can imagine the indifference to approval or disapproval—except for political reasons—that Henri IV, for example, would have shown; and one may properly contrast it with the secret cringing of Louis at the ironic glances of his court. He was at heart ashamed of La Vallière; and he wished she would not betray him so absurdly. He was throughout his life most afraid of ridicule; and there was, he felt obscurely, something ridiculous in his attachment to the impulsive and natural girl who was capable of committing any folly, utterly out of tone with the court, and offensive to Louis's own sense of his dignity. A single instance will suffice to show how ill-bred (ill-breeding being inability to adapt oneself to one's environment) Louise always was.

The Flanders campaign was followed by the king and the court; La Vallière was suddenly smitten by jealousy; she saw the king with her new rival, La Montespan; immediately she gave the order to rejoin him, and her carriage was driven helter-skelter across the fields, heedless of the imminent danger, in the hope of snatching Louis from his infatuation. The queen was present; she would never have permitted herself to interfere publicly with the amusements of the king, and she had surely more right than Louise to assert her prerogative. When she saw Louise dashing across country in pursuit of the king, she was

horrified; she gave orders to stop her. Herein we vividly see the difference in the attitude of the two women: one, the wife, bearing injuries smilingly, schooling her personal feelings, thinking of the majesty of her royal spouse, and endeavouring to prevent another from intruding on his private occupations; the other, a sensitive creature, uninstructed in the severe etiquette of the court, careless of dignity, her own or the king's, driving post-haste, in the sight of the army and the court, to stop the king's philandering. It was a sorry enough spectacle. One feels pity for La Vallière. But one is not always impressed by her character. Never did she refrain from making stupid scenes when she was hurt—scenes that could only harm her own cause, to say nothing of that of the king. On this occasion the king was exceedingly cold to her, as well he might be. But the lesson did not cure her. Nothing could cure her. She who was usually so reserved, was like a female tiger when she was aroused. She had the gift of tears, a penchant for tragedy which can easily turn to comedy. How could Louis, alarmed at the slightest sneer, wounded by the suspicion of a contemptuous smile, endure Louise for many years? The answer is that Louis was essentially feeble. His outward calm was a mask. He was drawn to Louise by a fellow sympathy in secret misfortune, and he was held to her by his incorrigible reluctance to give pain. Louis was fundamentally

kindly, but it was a kindness that was born of his sense of inferiority. All his life he was bullied—bullied by Mazarin, by his mother, by Marie Mancini, by the fluttering Louise, by the audacious Montespan, by the piously sighing Maintenon; bullied because he dared not assert himself if he was truly challenged; bullied chiefly by women because women had more opportunity, and more instinct, because they divined his horror of scandal, his cowardice at the thought of public rebuke, because they realized that the haughty demeanour covered the soul of a schoolboy fearful of being taken in fault. The psychological sense of women is often acute: they saw what his courtiers did not see and what his biographers have not always seen.

Louis at last openly abandoned Marie-Thérèse and installed Louise in a house which stood in the gardens of the Palais-Royal. There she was confined, and Colbert, acting for the king, made all the necessary arrangements, provided doctors, servants, and foster-parent for the child. Louise endeavoured to remain unseen, but he sat by her bedside for some time, and then went off to hunt. One of her accouchements was at Vincennes, where the queen was in residence and might have entered her room at any moment; surely a defiance of decency. At times she behaved without apparent regard to the interests of her royal lover and did not willingly accept the consequences of her ambiguous position. When Louis at last grew tired of her

she became embarrassing. La Montespan succeeded her in the king's affections, but she stayed at court, mocked and persecuted, suffering and jealous, in sad eclipse, until she could stand it no more, and fled again to Chaillot. Louis was weary of her, but he could not bear that she should depart in this hysterical manner. He did not, as on the earlier occasion, run after her but he sent Colbert to bring her back—by force if necessary. She had begun her career as a screen for Henrietta. She was to end her career as a screen for La Montespan. She was the recognized mistress, and her presence at court could not provoke further scandal. It was her absence that would be scandalous, that would turn all eyes on La Montespan. There is some unconscious cruelty in Louis's insistence on preserving her for years as a cloak for his later peccadillos. Not until 1675 was she allowed to retire to the convent. She entered the rigorous order of the Carmelites, and there, in the name of Louise de la Miséricorde, with prayers and fastings for the space of thirty-five years, she could not help remembering, though she tried to forget, her former glory, her former power, her former affection for the unfaithful monarch.

Chapter Ten

THE DIGNITY OF FRANCE

THE dignity of France—that is to say, the dignity of Louis XIV—was one of the principal concerns, perhaps the exclusive concern, of the king from the beginning. In France the position of the king, seriously shaken by the Fronde, was completely re-established. Abroad France was regarded as one of the leading countries of the West. But Louis wished to emphasize this fact and lost no opportunity of aggression and glorification.

Circumstances quickly rendered the king almost unassailable. The quarrelsome nobles cancelled each other as an opposition force; and the system of court etiquette was increasing its tyranny every day until the sole business of anybody with aristocratic pretensions was to seek the smiles of the monarch, though this meant for him the vapid idle life of anterooms and reception rooms, and the neglect of estates from which he should have drawn his strength. Parliament had been effectively discredited as a political organization and had become contemptible in the eyes of the people. The people, without allies, were help-

less. The practice of calling assemblies of the States-Generals was obsolete. Ministers were subservient to the king, and most of them at this time were, fortunately for Louis, men of sufficient talents to assure fair success, but without overweening ambitions.

France was therefore strong. The country was quiet, the government was efficient. The French were French. They were not a mixture of faces or a conglomeration of states. Their territory was compact and geographically well placed—it stood at the cross-roads of the North and the South, the East and the West. The French were excellent soldiers, and they had excellent generals, especially in Turenne and Condé, while Louvois was, on the whole, a good military organizer, and Vauban showed positive genius in the fortification of the French frontiers. Lyonne was a skilful diplomatist. Colbert was a conscientious worker who improved the finances, the roads, the ports, the public services of every kind.

Spain was not to be feared. The Spanish branch of the Austrian house had fallen into decrepitude. The country was ill-governed: it was stagnant; it was in the clutches of the most intolerant and cruel Catholicism. Its possessions in Europe were scattered and its communications with them were imperfect. The German branch of the Austrian house was in even worse case. The elected emperor could not depend for support on the princes of the Empire. Indeed the

French king often found his own allies among these princes. Besides, Austria could never give its undivided attention to Western questions. Bolingbroke has well expressed the situation: "It was not merely the want of cordial co-operation among the Princes of the Empire that disabled the Emperor from acting with vigour in the cause of his family then, nor that has rendered the House of Austria a dead weight upon all her allies ever since. Bigotry and its inseparable companion cruelty, as well as the tyranny and avarice of the Court of Vienna, created in those days almost a perpetual diversion of the Imperial arms from all effective opposition to France. I mean to speak of the troubles in Hungary. Whatever they became in their progress, they were caused originally by the usurpations and persecutions of the Emperor; and when the Hungarians were called rebels first, they were called so for no other reason than this—that they would not be slaves. The dominion of the Emperor being less supportable than that of the Turks, this unhappy people opened a door to the latter to infest the Empire, instead of making their country what it had been before, a barrier against the Ottoman power. France became a sure though secret ally of the Turks as well as the Hungarians, and has found her account in it by keeping the Emperor in perpetual alarms on that side, while she has ravaged the Empire and the Low Countries on the other."

There were then only England and Holland which might offer a real menace. But England, with the return of the Stuarts, was hardly to be taken seriously. The English king was in the pocket of the French king. Either England looked on indifferently, or when stirred against France was a half-hearted opponent. At least this was so for many years. There remained, therefore, only the Dutch; and they appeared at first likely to succumb to French attacks.

The policy of Richelieu was to acquire for France the frontiers of Ancient Gaul—that is to say, to make an impregnable France. The policy of Louis XIV (and this policy he inherited from Mazarin) was to obtain the succession of Spain. Richelieu's policy was truly French; Louis's was personal. The cardinal would have consolidated France by keeping her within what he considered to be her natural limits. The king would have enfeebled France by incorporating alien territories, and in the long run he did so enfeeble France. Certainly he did well from the national point of view, in so far as he carried out Richelieu's designs. But he did badly from the national point of view, in so far as he attempted to carry out his own (or Mazarin's) designs. All the blunders of Louis in the diplomatic domain are related more or less to this false idea that the crown of Spain could be superimposed on the crown of France. It is this false idea

that cost France her best blood and treasures, and eventually brought defeat and disaster on Louis.

He began by braggartly demanding that Europe should recognize him as its chief. He challenged and insulted everybody. One cannot discern the smallest trace of diplomatic ability in these repeated humiliations which Louis inflicted on the powers. He had married a princess of Spain. He was the son-in-law of Philip IV. Why, then, without political reason, should he, a year after his marriage, have given Portugal military aid against Spain? Why should he have sent four thousand veterans under Maréchal de Schomberg to establish the House of Braganza, by the victory of Villaviciosa, a few years later? At the same time he treated his Spanish father-in-law harshly by demanding precedence for his French ambassadors. France and Spain were nominally equal, but at the reception of the Swedish ambassador in London, the Spanish ambassador, Baron de Vatteville, wished to proceed before the French ambassador, the Comte d'Estrades. There was a stupid quarrel in the streets —riots in which the French were badly handled. Louis immediately ordered the Spanish ambassador at Paris to leave the court. He immediately threatened war. He sent an ultimatum to the King of Spain asking for the recognition of ambassadorial precedence for France. Here was a ridiculous pretext for war; and the King of Spain showed good sense—though

perhaps little courage—in agreeing to the impertinent demands of his son-in-law. He was obliged to commission Fuentes to state, in the presence of the French court and of the foreign envoys, that in future Spanish ministers would not claim equality with French ministers. Louis caused this statement to be recorded in writing, and turning to the papal nuncio, the doyen of the diplomatic corps, he asked him to take good note that France was superior in rank to Spain. A notable victory!

If Louis had the smallest notion of reigning over Spain or of placing a member of his family on the throne—as he had—it would be difficult to conceive a more foolish method of ensuring unpopularity for himself or for the members of his family.

At Rome the French ambassador, Duc de Créqui, annoyed the populace. His servants came into collision with the Corsicans who composed the Papal Guard. There can be no doubt that the French were to blame and that Créqui was an insolent person. Inflamed by this incident, some Corsicans fired on the carriage of Créqui. The duke demanded satisfaction. Four months were spent in negotiations. Pope Alexander VII hung two offenders and dismissed the Cardinal Imperiale, Governor of Rome, for negligence. Surely nobody could reasonably ask for more, and the pope was generally treated with respect by Christian monarchs. But Louis was insatiable. He

NAVAL COMBAT IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

seized Avignon and threatened to send an army into Italy if his terms were not accepted. These terms were odious. The Corsican guard was to be disbanded. The pope's brother was to be exiled. A pyramid was to be erected in the centre of Rome with an inscription relating the story of the injury and its reparation. The Cardinal Chigi, the nephew of the pope, was to present the pontifical excuses to the young king.

No wonder, as an old biographer of Louis says: "In foreign countries there was a sentiment of fearful obedience for all that emanated from Louis XIV. Care was taken not to insult his Royal Majesty for everybody knew the results of an offence thrown in the face which he carried so high."

As for England, which he might have kept, under the Stuarts, as his ally, Louis made himself incredibly objectionable. Madame, the sister of Charles II, was married to the king's brother. England was fighting in Portugal for the benefit of France. Yet Louis irritated the English on a simple question of saluting the British flag in British waters. At this time, be it remembered, the British and the Dutch were the great maritime powers. France had, as yet, no navy to speak of. At least Louis might have waited. His violent letter to Charles II helped to make the Stuarts hated by the English people, and ultimately did something to bring about their downfall—and the disasters that marked the declining days of Louis. In the same

year Charles sold Dunkirk to France. Doubtless it was for France an important acquisition—the key to Flanders and Picardy. But doubtless, as Michelet acutely remarks, the sale by Charles demonstrated to the English that a French lackey was on their throne. The prodigal Charles obtained his few millions and a promise that Louis would support him against those who regretted the days of Cromwell.

In Holland Louis behaved with the same recklessness. The brothers De Witt—Jan and Cornelius—were friendly towards France. Louis managed to destroy the French party in Holland. To Louis was due the subsequent triumph of William of Orange, the future King of England, and therefore again to Louis's diplomacy are to be attributed the reverses which fell upon France. It was not understood in France that De Witt and the great Dutch Admiral Ruyter were the natural enemies of England. The French policy should have been to keep Holland and England, maritime rivals, apart. Instead, nothing was neglected to bring them together and their union was effected when William of Orange ascended the English throne.

Another blunder which Louis committed was openly to turn against the Turks. They had been in more or less direct association with France, had rendered France undoubted services for many years, and there was duplicity as well as folly in Louis's lending

of aid to the Austrians, and again of aid to the Venetians against Kiuprili. Once more Louis lent troops to Montecuculli, the finest strategist of the Empire, in order to repel the Turks. All this was not his business. He was raising up enemies and making no friends. He was stirring up suspicion against France throughout Europe. He was sowing the wind and would reap the whirlwind.

In these Eastern expeditions there perished Beaufort—Beaufort, the King of the Markets, the rough-speeched hearty-mannered descendant of a king, who had played a conspicuous part in the Fronde. It was at Candia. The attack on the Turks succeeded at first: they were surprised in their sleep. But in their flight they set fire to powder trains, and the barrels of powder exploded amid the French. It was the turn of the French to fly for they believed that the whole ground was mined. Beaufort tried to stop the panic. It was impossible. But at least he would not fly, and the Roi des Halles, with sword uplifted, plunged into the ranks of the Turks, and was never seen again.

In September 1665, Philip of Spain died. He was succeeded by a boy of four years, Charles II. The child was sickly and was not expected to live long, and although his claim to the throne could not be disputed, all kinds of rich perspectives were opened to the eyes of Louis. He was the natural protector of the boy-king. He was the husband of the infanta, and there-

fore the uncle of the child. His mother, Anne of Austria, the sister of the dead king, was dying. A few months later she was to succumb to her cruel and incurable malady—cancer of the breast. The pious woman besought Louis to exterminate heresy: in France to finish with the Huguenots; in Holland to bring the Protestants to the dust; in England to convert the king and court to papacy. It was a large programme: but at least it implied respect for Spain, the land of the Inquisition. This was the moment he chose for a family quarrel, a family quarrel which was bound to engage the two countries in war.

But by this time Louis was fairly launched on his career of vainglory. Philip had foreseen that the man who had aided the Portuguese, who had flouted England, who had humbled the pope, would take advantage of the disorganization of Spain. He had married his second daughter to his Austrian cousin and had created Austrian claims which might be opposed against French claims. The Emperor Leopold was relatively feeble in spite of his grandiloquent title, and if Spain was to have a new master it was better that he should be Austrian rather than French.

At first Louis professed to be conciliatory. He told the mother of the boy-king that he was the kinsman of Charles, that he would protect him and cover him with his friendship. But while he was giving these assurances he was preparing for war. He bought off

the Rhineland princes, and gave subsidies to Portugal. He told the Dutch that he would not move in the Low Countries without them, and would even help Ruyter to sail up the Thames. England was not likely to intervene. Until the last moment he cajoled and deceived everybody, and finally, in May 1667, he declared war on Spain and invaded Flanders.

What was the pretext? The custom of the Low Countries was that the paternal heritage should devolve upon the children of a first marriage. Charles was the son of a second marriage. His title to the Spanish throne was clear under Spanish law, but his title to the possessions of Spain in Brabant could, under this custom, be disputed. Marie-Thérèse, according to the thesis of Louis, was the heiress of the Brabant possessions—the duchy itself, Malines, Nemours, Limbourg, various places beyond the Meuse, Artois, Hainaut, the Duchy of Luxembourg. But the Spanish court contended that a civil custom could have no bearing on a political succession; moreover that Marie-Thérèse had renounced in the contract of marriage her claims to her father's inheritance. There were not wanting arguments on the French side. It was urged that Marie-Thérèse was a minor when she had made the renunciation. It was likewise urged that the renunciation was conditional on the payment of the dower that Mazarin had artfully demanded and that this dower had not been paid. As for the dis-

tinction between personal and political succession, it was argued that the Low Countries were private domains. It is unnecessary to go deeply into the discussions of the lawyers. Louis was willing to make a plausible case, but his chief arguments were armies.

It was possible to refute this or that legal contention. It was more difficult to refute Turenne and Condé. There was a well-trained army which Louvois was anxious to see in action. There were twenty-six regiments of cavalry, six regiments of foreign cavalry, forty-six regiments of French infantry, and fourteen regiments of foreign infantry—a total of one hundred and fifty thousand men. It was the strongest army that any European power had put upon foot since the Crusades.

The war of Flanders promised to be merely an amusing military promenade, a splendid fête. The last check to the personal rule of Louis had disappeared when his mother died; there was now an opportunity of performing brilliant exploits which would dazzle the ladies of the court. Those ladies, indeed, took part in the parade. They went in their carriages in the wake of the army. There were fine feasts, noble parties, entertaining flirtations. The danger was negligible, and the expedition was a pleasant pastime.

Louis has been reproached, and in the end reproached himself, with having loved war to excess;

but with such elements of success, placed at the head of a nation which had a passion for military glory, how could a young prince, ardent, ambitious, thirsting for renown, guarantee himself, asks a French apologist, against temptation? So he was, perhaps, more content with the refusal of the Spanish Government than he would have been by Spanish acquiescence which would have deprived him of the occasion of gathering laurels.

A word should be said about Louvois. François Michel Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, was then twenty-six years of age. His father was among the secretaries of state bequeathed by Mazarin to Louis. While he was still in his teens he studied the art of war, in the office of his father, whom he presently succeeded. While Colbert was organizing France for peace, Louvois was organizing France for war.

Louvois was brutal, exigent, ferocious, but an immense worker. It was not in the field that he displayed his talents; it was in the bureau. He centralized everything. He introduced many reforms. Certainly as a military administrator he was remarkable. The system of voluntary enlistment was maintained, but a stricter discipline was imposed. The regiments were distinguished by different uniforms. On stores of provisions he laid great stress. Engineers were employed as never before, and to artillery he paid great attention. Louvois would not tolerate

the irregularities which had marked the use of the cavalry, in which everybody tried to shine individually. He supplied the infantry with muskets and bayonets, and drilled them and taught them how to march. It was not enough for an officer to be a nobleman; under Louvois an officer had to learn his business like a common soldier. Discipline, discipline, and again discipline, was Louvois's motto; and for this purpose the haphazard methods of obtaining supplies were superseded by carefully thought-out arrangements. Campaigns were studied not as brilliant dashes but as well-organized affairs. Roads and fortresses, clothes and food, deserved as much attention as manœuvres.

Le Prestre de Vauban was another servant of Louis who enabled him to obtain many victories. He was the greatest engineer of his time. The king asked him to fortify Dunkirk in 1663, and his accomplishment is cited as a masterpiece. But he did not only know how to make fortresses; he knew how to destroy them. Hundreds of strongholds did he render stronger, and many did he construct altogether; but Louis chiefly appreciated his presence at scores of sieges where his advice was invaluable. Louis loved triumphs but he wanted them to be safe and certain; and Vauban's genius made the reduction of fortresses easy and mechanical; so that Louis had only to appear at the proper moment to vanquish.

On the northeast side Vauban endeavoured to give France an impregnable frontier. Lille, Metz, Strasbourg, and many other places—on the Sambre, on the Meuse, in the Valley of the Oise, in the Valley of the Moselle—did he add to the defences of France. On the coast and in the south did he work unceasingly; and to enumerate the naval ports and citadels which owe everything to Vauban would fill pages.

In trench work, in artillery work he was equally celebrated; and altogether Louvois was admirably seconded on his efforts to make France the greatest of military nations.

The king himself marched with the chief army commanded by Turenne on this Flanders promenade, which was called the *prise de possession*. Spain had no serious means of resistance. In two months Charleroi, Tournai, Furnes, Mons, Douai, Lille, Coutrai, Armentières, were, one after the other, taken. It was a capital summer, and the whole province was controlled before the bad weather set in.

The Dutch were disturbed. The French would be an uneasy neighbour. So they decided to intervene and concluded a triple alliance—Holland, England, and Sweden—to oblige Spain and France to conclude peace. One of the conditions was that Spain should cede to France those places which had been taken in the Low Countries, unless the two parties preferred Franche-Comté to go to France. An offer to cease

hostilities until the spring of 1668 was refused by Spain; it was believed that the winter would in any case stay hostilities. Louis was annoyed. He decided to prove that he could continue his conquest in winter as well as in summer. Condé was charged with the task of invading Burgundy and the Franche-Comté. The new expedition was undertaken with secrecy and rapidity. Soldiers were sent by different routes to Dijon. They found themselves, to their own surprise, to be the contingents of a considerable army. In a few weeks Condé took Besançon, Salins, and Dole. The king and Louvois arrived with fresh troops. Franche-Comté was quickly subdued.

It was a Pyrrhic victory. Louis was alarmed when he saw the emperor stirring and the Swiss collecting troops. The Duc de Lorraine offered an army against France. Turenne and Condé were confident that they could continue their triumphant march; they were thunder-struck when Louis decided in favour of prudence. He seems to have expected that if he was conciliatory towards the emperor, he and the emperor could divide up the Spanish kingdom on the death of Charles. But Charles did not die. He did not die until thirty years later. Louis, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, restored Franche-Comté. He kept the towns in Flanders which he had taken. Here was enough to whet his appetite for war, but not enough to satisfy it. There was to be a bloodier sequel.

Chapter Eleven

LA MONTESPAN

WHEN Louis XIV, in the mansion of Fouquet, could hardly be prevented from giving orders for the arrest of the magnificent financier, he nevertheless took careful note of the disposition of the splendid abode, and he asked Fouquet for the names of his artists and architects.

"Le Vau," announced Fouquet, beaming with pleasure, and Louis decided that Le Vau should become his architect.

"Le Nôtre," said Fouquet, and Louis decided that Le Nôtre should become his gardener.

"Le Brun," said Fouquet, and Louis decided that Le Brun should be his painter-in-chief.

Many years were to elapse before Louis took up his permanent residence in the château of Versailles, but from that moment Versailles began to grow. The site was badly chosen. Louis XIII had built a hunting lodge in the humble little village of Versailles. Now Louis wanted a palace that would outshine the palaces of Paris. The Louvre was very well in its

way, but it was in the heart of the great bustling city, where commoners rubbed shoulders with nobles, where there could be no separation of plebeians and aristocrats. Besides, Paris was for him the theatre of the Fronde, and the king could not bear to be reminded of his boyhood. Louis wanted his own world —a world in which he should be the sun. Those around him should bask in the light of his smiles or wilt in the night of his frowns. He would not tolerate people who were independent of him and indifferent to him. He should be the fixed star of the court, and the court should be composed of satellites who had no connection with the exterior universe. Of Saint-Germain, Louis had unhappy memories, and it was not possible to make much of the old château. Louis would begin from the beginning. He would create not merely a palace, but a planetary system.

Thus the work began in 1661. Considerable additions were made to the existing buildings. The architects were entrusted with the renovation and embellishment, in Renaissance style, of the building which was to be a lasting monument of his glory and the mausoleum of the French aristocracy. At the same time Le Nôtre designed the park and gardens; quite early in the effective reign of Louis XIV these gardens rivalled those of Vaux. The king was anxious to give at the earliest possible date a fête which would dazzle his entourage and would particularly dazzle

Louise de La Vallière. There were extraordinary divertissements which lasted three days. They had for general title *Les Plaisirs de l'Île Enchantée.* On the third day Molière played *La Princesse d'Elide* and nobody can read the speech of Arbate to the Prince Euriale without realizing that Molière was referring to the king and the favourite. The king could not be blamed for the tender movements of his heart, the sweet transports of his amorous flame. Without these sentiments a young prince could hardly be grand and generous.

"C'est une qualité que j'aime en un monarque,
La tendresse du cœur est une grande marque;
Que d'un prince à votre âge on peut tout présumer
Dès qu'on voit que son âme est capable d'aimer.
Oui, cette passion, de toutes la plus belle,
Traine dans son esprit cent vertus après elle;
Aux nobles actions elle pousse les cœurs,
Et tous les grands héros ont senti ses ardeurs."

The following week Molière played before the king and the court at Versailles the three first acts of *Tartufe.* The king found these acts excellent, but he nevertheless forbade the representation of a comedy which had such a bitter flavour. As for the courtiers, they were indignant. Throughout his career Molière was condemned to these half-triumphs. His greatest successes, such as the *École des Femmes*, were perilous for him. His plays were held to wound the most

respectable feelings. They shocked the courtiers, they castigated the bigots; they were denounced as impious and indecent. That the king should have supported Molière is unquestionably to his credit though his motives were mixed. He rejoiced in the shafts that were launched against the *précieuses*, the hypocrites, the Don Juans. Molière's terrible commentary raised him enemies, but the king felt instinctively that they were his enemies too.

What wealth was poured out in the making of Versailles. It is estimated that the equivalent of two years' French revenue was sunk in this enterprise. To compare the money of the seventeenth century with our own is misleading, but the hundred million livres which were expended may be regarded as equal to a double budget of today. Moreover, this does not take into account the vast amount of unpaid labour. Nor does it include the enormous sums that were poured out by the nobility in providing accommodation for themselves and in indulging in competitive ostentation. Over thirty thousand men were employed on the park and palace at the same time. They had not only to erect the building but to lay out and drain the grounds. Terrible epidemics thinned their numbers. Versailles cost in human life as much as a prolonged war. From all over France trees were brought in scores of thousands. Water was especially difficult to procure in the vicinity of Versailles. The machine of

Marly was constructed at enormous expense to feed the fountains; it was judged insufficient and an attempt was made to divert the course of the Eure; but this unhappy project had to be abandoned after it had cost greatly in gold and in life. About sixteen hundred arches for viaducts were actually made, some of them twice as high as the towers of Notre-Dame. There were besides innumerable smaller arches. The water was to be carried over hills and through vales, for the pleasure of the megalomaniac who could not suffer that anything done for him should be on an ordinary scale.

When Madame de Montespan succeeded to La Vallière a porcelain palace, the Trianon, was constructed for her. It has now disappeared; a larger palace of marble took its place. Then the palace of Marly, which was almost as dear as that of Versailles, and a number of other palaces were built. A more gorgeous tribute to human vanity was never offered. The visitor today sees the lakes and canals on which glided the gilded boats of Louis; and the statues and the grottoes and the lawns on which marquis and marquises danced to the music of violins. He is shown the great galleries with their marbles and bronzes: he passes from salon to salon filled with paintings and tapestries and friezes. But Versailles when inhabited was glittering with gilded and silvered furniture and in the resplendent halls, to which led beautiful stair-

cases, Louis sat in state clad in embroidered cloth of gold, decorated with diamonds—veritably garbed for his representation of the Roi-Soleil.

The whole place is unique. It was all meant for the glorification of Louis. Everywhere are pictures which tell of his heroic exploits, of his mighty battles. He is even shown on ceilings as an Olympian deity. Flattery could no further go. Versailles is, despite its unparalleled richness, a pathetic reminder of human weakness. As one contemplates this highly ornamented pile, and wanders in the alleys, by the basins, the groves, and the waterfalls, one cannot but remember that Versailles is the outcome of a morbid imagination, perpetually haunted by the need of impressing an obsequious privileged circle. Privacy Louis could not bear. He had to live in the sight of a thousand courtiers. In their presence he was dressed and undressed. In their presence, a lonely man, he took his meals. For half a century he snatched no holidays from the public business of kingship, never tired of the incessant round of ceremonial. These things were not a hardship for Louis. They were a necessity. They were needed to support the amazing opinion which he wished to have of his virtues. Deep down in his soul there must have been a strange unhappiness.

So was this envelope of magnificence, this cloak of ostentation, worn by Louis. He had the means and opportunity of constructing a universe which eternally

resounded with panegyrics, and what matter that Versailles was built of dead men's bones, that the fountains sent up jets of tears, provided everything that he saw ministered to his monstrous egotism, provided that he could cover his nakedness with a show of magnificence?

If Marie Mancini caught the king because she was Cinderella among her sisters, and held him so strongly that it required all the authority of Mazarin and his mother to prevent him from making her queen, if La Vallière seduced him by her gentleness and physical misfortunes, and held him for many years after his passion had spent itself, La Montespan deliberately set out to capture him by her voluptuous beauty, and once in her toils he found it harder than ever to escape. With women Louis was always helpless. He could generally lord it over the men, he could keep them at a respectful distance. But the feebler sex found out his foible. He was clay in the hands of all his mistresses. He did not dare to send them packing when he had had enough of them, as a roistering monarch would have done. They came into his life to stay. Over them he could not exercise his authority. A second facet of his "inferiority" manifested itself in these sexual relations.

This is not an imaginary picture of Louis's complete subordination to the women with whom he committed himself. It is revealed in a hundred incidents.

It may be urged that a man who is in love will do anything for the object of his adoration. But Louis was not in love for long. With the exception of Marie Mancini, the favourites were not able to hold his heart. Yet they maintained their ascendancy. La Montespan quickly replaced La Vallière in his affections; but La Vallière kept her position as *maîtresse en titre*. He could not bear that she should appear to desert him, and he could not make up his mind to send her away. Thus his liaison with La Vallière continued to exist nominally and intermittently for years after Louis had really abandoned her for La Montespan: and the incredible spectacle of three women, the queen and two mistresses, recognized as such, riding in the same carriage, was sometimes seen. Nor must this inability to conclude be ascribed to royal generosity. No, Louis, who displayed such pomp, who insisted on such ceremony, who defied the kings of Europe, who revelled in adulation, was clearly on this side poor-spirited, weakly, timid, conscious of his inferiority. He helps to prove for us the truth of the alternative which Dr. Adler indicates in his theory of adult conduct determined by an impoverished and suppressed boyhood.

It is a startling contrast, and it is curious to observe how the dual nature of Louis springs from the same roots. He was never surfeited with the most extravagant praise, which he found necessary to support his

MADAME DE MONTESPAN, FROM A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING

good conceit of himself. He could not react against the importunities of the women who obtained the smallest claim upon him, and he submitted meekly to humiliation, to insult, to embarrassment, that the average man would not have tolerated. While he was the splendid Sun-King in public, he was a pitiful puppet in private.

Françoise Athénaïs de Rochechouart de Mortemart, Marquise de Montespan, was altogether different from Louise de La Vallière. She was high-born and she behaved like a professional courtesan. Louise had been disinterested, and (at first) humble. Françoise was exceedingly interested, and proud. Louise was genuinely in love with the king. Françoise was merely in love with the prospect of power. Louise had resisted. Françoise set out methodically to encompass the king. Louise had won him by shrinking from him. Françoise won him by audaciously pursuing him.

She was a striking beauty. An Italian observer has described her eulogistically: "She has golden hair, large blue eyes, the colour of the sky, aquiline nose, well-formed, a little rich red mouth, very fine teeth —in a word, a perfect visage." Her body, we are told, was exquisitely proportioned though plump. Later she became uncommonly fat, and there is an indiscreet picture given by an ambassador who, as she was getting into her carriage, saw her huge thighs—as

large in circumference, he tells us, as his whole body. On the other hand the Palatine princess, who afterwards espoused Monsieur, tells us that La Montespan was a dirty person. This testimony may be rejected; for La Montespan was in the habit of submitting herself to a regular course of massage. Two or three hours a day she was stretched naked on her bed and was rubbed with pommades and perfumes.

In the fêtes of Fontainebleau she had already figured under the name of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente. She came of a very ancient family—that of the Ducs d'Aquitaine—which was celebrated for its beauty and its wit. In 1663 she married Henri Louis de Pardaillan de Gondrin, Marquis de Montespan, who himself came of an illustrious family of Gascony.

The antiquity of the name of Mortemart is attested by genealogists, who assert that one of the earliest crusaders obtained for his portion a piece of territory in which lay the Dead Sea—La Mer Morte.

At first the king paid little attention to her. But she was bent upon his conquest, and her position in the court gave her opportunities for perpetually throwing herself in his way. She became the close friend of La Vallière: a friend whom she accompanied everywhere. In the ballet of Benserade, *Les Muses*, she represented a shepherdess, and recited

verses which expressed the love of the rose for the sun. The king, at the mention of the sun, began to take notice of her.

In her letters Madame de Sévigné pays a tribute to the cleverness of La Montespan. This cleverness she displayed in appearing in the apartments of La Vallière when the King visited Louise. Louise was often sad and mutely self-reproachful. La Montespan was gay and easily contented, and her qualities showed to advantage in contrast with those of her friend. The result was inevitable. The king's first flame for Louise had died down, and here were two women, one of them sweet and devoted but melancholy, the other dazzling and witty and cheerful. It was impossible that the king should not remark the difference.

Then came the war of Flanders, that military promenade in which "Venus accompanied Mars." It was during this campaign that Louis was thrown into the closest contact with La Montespan. They lodged as fortune befell. Sometimes they would sleep in a carriage under the summer stars. Sometimes they would find a wayside inn. In any case La Montespan, as well as La Vallière, was not far from the king, who revelled in this unconventional life spent among carriages and cannon, divided between picnicking and fighting. What better circumstances for philandering could be found? The association of La Montespan

and La Vallière favoured the former. The king entered the wrong room. Louise could not but observe the signs of a new infatuation. One day she reproached the king, and Louis, in a brusque, brutal temper, took up the little dog which was on his knees, threw it on the lap of Louise, exclaiming, "Take it; that's enough for you." And he openly went into the chamber of Madame de Montespan.

The queen ventured to remark on the king's behaviour. But the young man, flushed with fighting and love-making, asked her: "Have we not always the same bed, Madame?"—"Certainly, Sire," responded the queen. "Very well," said Louis, "what more do you want?" So Louis rode behind the army as he had done when a boy, but how much more gratifying to him were the new conditions! Then he was in pitiful plight, a forced wanderer, in personal peril, his throne at the mercy of a single battle. Now he was a mighty monarch, pursuing an easy prey, and adding to his renown, while flirting with the ladies who were thrown into his company in the same haphazard barn. It happened that there were ten or a dozen women in the bedroom of the young king. Here were no hardships—except for the queen, who was annoyed at this tempting promiscuity. Here were only delights. It was all very amusing, and these familiar scenes, the smell of powder and of perfumes commingled, the

proximity of women and warriors, the alternation of military and amourous adventure, could not but stimulate the sensuality of the king. And who could be more sensuous than La Montespan? She was a capricious creature, and could not always disguise, when once the king was won, her boredom at being left alone with him. But that too served her purpose. The king was piqued at her indifference, affected or real, and there were provocative lovers' quarrels. He strove to arouse a veritable affection and, to provoke her admiration, placed himself in peril. His ambition increased. He wanted to shine in her eyes. . . . Louis is always regarded as the representative and inspirer of the classical age, but there was in him a strong romantic strain.

Everything conspired to push Louis on his career of magnificence—magnificent wars, magnificent palaces. For La Montespan, descendant of the Duc d'Aquitaine, he transformed Saint-Germain, he built the Trianons, he erected the Château de Clagny. He had gardens laid out for her—hanging gardens at Saint-Germain, enchanting gardens at Versailles which were particularly admired by Madame de Sévigné.

She was ready to encourage every extravagant tendency in Louis. Her husband, poor man, was not sufficiently trained in the manners of the time; and

he had the bad taste to protest. He smacked his wife's face, he told everybody he was a widower though Françoise was parading at court, and he dressed in black, and rode in a black-draped carriage with horns, symbol of his disgrace, painted on it for armourial bearings—a magnificent *cocu* who proclaimed his misfortunes. La Montespan laughed the louder and amused Louis. This was far more diverting than the dreary affair with La Vallière which still dragged on. The court had become aware of the king's shifting affections, and streamed into the apartments of the new idol, where she sat in sumptuous toilette, brilliant with diamonds and beauty. That a miserable husband should publicly display jealousy of the king and should privately ill-treat his wife who had been singled out from many aspirants by the king was comic as well as impertinent. The courtiers mocked, but Montespan grew angrier. He stamped and stormed, and his worst words were carried to the king. There was only one thing for a self-respecting monarch to do. He promptly signed a *lettre de cachet*, and the bad-tempered husband was taken to the Bastille, there to acquire a proper sense of the honour that had been bestowed upon his wife, and the honours that might, had he been reasonable, have been bestowed upon him. Instead of smilingly asking for high offices, for royal bounties, for enviable decorations—and using his wife to advance his fortunes—he was foolish enough to mar

his chances and incur the displeasure of Louis. As a result of this folly it was with difficulty that his petition for banishment to his estates was accepted. There he lived his solitary life, while La Montespan ruled Louis, and, through Louis, France.

Chapter Twelve

MADAME SE MEURT . . .

MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER, the Grande Mademoiselle, richest lady in the land, grand-daughter of Henri IV, cousin of Louis XIV, who had destroyed her hope of marrying the king by firing on his troops in the troubles of the Fronde, who had since sought a husband among princes, kings, and emperors, and who had somehow always failed, was in love with a simple gentleman of the court.

Madame de Sévigné announces the news in the most memorable of her letters: "I am about to tell you the most astonishing thing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant; the most bewildering, the most unheard of, the most singular, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the greatest, the smallest, the rarest, the commonest, the most dazzling, the most secret, the most brilliant, the most worthy of envy, in short, a thing of which one can find only a single example in past centuries, and indeed that example is not exact, a thing that we cannot realise at Paris, so how can you

realise it at Lyons, a thing that makes everybody cry, God help us! a thing that will happen on Sunday, though those who see it will think themselves crazy, a thing that will happen on Sunday but which perhaps will not happen on Monday . . . Monsieur de Lauzun is to be married on Sunday at the Louvre, guess to whom? I must tell you at last. He marries on Sunday, at the Louvre, with the permission of the King, Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle de—Mademoiselle, guess the name? He marries Mademoiselle, my faith, by my faith, my sworn faith, Mademoiselle, the Grande Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, daughter of the late Monsieur, Mademoiselle, grand-daughter of Henri IV, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle, cousin-german of the King, Mademoiselle, the only match in France worthy of Monsieur."

Antonin Nompar de Caumont, Marquis de Peguilin, afterwards Duc de Lauzun, was in stature "one of the smallest men that God ever made." His blond hair was uncombed and greasy. He had a red pointed nose. This is scarcely a complimentary picture of the Don Juan of the century, yet the impetuous Lauzun despite his appearance wrought great havoc among the ladies of the court. At least his eyes were beautiful, and we are told that his smile was at once "profound and false." If he was tiny he had a *belle jambe*. Lauzun was a strange mixture of bad and good qualities.

He was ambitious, discontent, fantastic, jealous, solitary, savage, malicious, witty, ready to plunge into any quarrel, extremely brave, a faithful friend. He was avaricious but he was capable of a singular liberality. Nobody, says Saint-Simon, looked more like the *grand seigneur*. The intrigues in which he was involved were numberless. Everybody, including the king, seems to have been a little afraid of him.

It was towards 1658 that he came up from his native Gascony, without money, but with an amazing confidence in his future—a true hero of Dumas. He boasted of some relationship with the Duc de Grammont, whose son, the Comte de Guiche, was one of the most notable young men at court. He pleased the young men—and the young women. Louis appointed him captain of his Dragoons and afterwards gave him several higher posts. Then the Duc de Mazarin, the *grand maître de l'artillerie*, wished to resign, and Lauzun asked for the nomination. The king promised it on condition that he remained silent until Louis himself chose to announce the news. Louvois, the Minister of War, was an enemy of Lauzun, and the king did not wish to find himself in opposition to the minister.

On the morning that the king was to sign his warrant, Lauzun happened to meet in the palace Nyert, the chief valet de chambre, and he foolishly thought that it would be well to take Nyert into his confidence and obtain his assistance. But Nyert was particularly

friendly with Louvois, and when Lauzun had told his story, he looked at his watch, pretended to have forgotten an order, hastened to Louvois's room, told him all he had heard, and then went back to Lauzun and continued the conversation.

Louvois decided to act immediately. He burst in upon the king and urged that the proposed appointment was an error. He exaggerated the faults of Lauzun, and concluded that Lauzun, as master of the artillery, would disorganize the whole army. Louis was annoyed because the secret was prematurely out. He tore up the warrant. When he passed the expectant candidate, he pretended not to see him. Thus did Lauzun lose this chance, as he was to lose a much greater chance, by a hair's breadth.

Madame de Montespan was one of his friends. He endeavoured to interest her in his suit. She, on her side, promised to do all she could. Yet nothing happened. Lauzun paid court to the *femme de chambre* of La Montespan, and eventually persuaded her to hide him under the bed of her mistress just before the king came, at his customary hour, to her rooms. Punctually at three o'clock in the afternoon Louis arrived. They talked freely about Lauzun, on the bed above the interested listener, who learned of the indiscretion of Nyert, the opposition of Louvois, and the mockery of La Montespan. For two hours he remained under the bed and escaped trembling with anger.

When he met La Montespan he asked her if she had obtained the consent of the king. She told him that her pleadings had produced the happiest effect.

The terrible Lauzun listened and replied: "There is only one thing which troubles me." "What is it?" asked La Montespan. "It is that from beginning to end you have lied to me." This was pretty language for an adventurous Gascon to use to the mistress of the king! But it was by no means the worst. She endeavoured to leave him, but he held her arm. "You must wait until I have shown you that I know what I am talking about." And he repeated the conversation of the king and La Montespan.

When she got away she rushed to the king and fainted. Louis was furious, but as he did not understand how Lauzun could have overheard him he preferred not to talk about the matter. But Lauzun was not a man to be put off. As soon as he found himself alone with the king he bluntly reproached Louis with failing to keep his word. "I made you a promise," said the king, "but it was conditional. You did not preserve the secret."

"Very well," exclaimed Lauzun, "there is only one thing for me to do—it is to break my sword, so that I shall not be tempted to serve again a prince who has failed to keep his word." Out flashed the sword: he broke it on his knees and threw the two pieces at the feet of the king. Louis nearly choked with choler.

He raised his stick to strike the insolent courtier, but instantly recovered himself. "No," he cried, "it shall not be said that I have struck a man of quality"; and he went to the window and pitched his stick into the courtyard. The next day Lauzun found himself in the Bastille.

Nevertheless Louis was intimidated by this resolute, ungovernable man, and not long afterwards he liberated Lauzun and gave him another post. Among the mistresses of Lauzun was the Princesse de Monaco, who seems also to have ceded to the king; and Lauzun, one day at Saint-Cloud, seeing Madame de Monaco, with other ladies, seated on the ground, moved about among them, and at last as by accident planted his heel savagely on the hand of the unfaithful dame, pirouetted and departed.

Such were the eccentricities of this extraordinary man—eccentricities which would have destroyed the prospects of anyone else, but which terrorized and amused at the same time the king and his entourage. The Grande Mademoiselle adored Lauzun. They agreed to marry, and in spite of the Gascon's comparatively lowly birth Louis actually consented to the mésalliance. No wonder Madame de Sévigné was both astonished and sceptical.

It would have been well had the wedding taken place immediately, but Lauzun, with his usual presumption and vanity, postponed it until he could have

livery made for all his household, and demanded that the marriage should be celebrated with the royal mass.

Meantime the court endeavoured to stop the union. Monsieur, the Duc d'Orléans, made urgent representations, as did Condé, as did Madame de Montespan, as did Louvois. The king, not at all as inflexible as he is generally described, was again swayed. He changed his mind, and despite the tears of Mademoiselle forbade the union at the last moment. Louis listened to accounts of the disrespectful language used by Lauzun against him, and at last his pride was seriously hurt, and he gave the order to arrest the uncontrollable fiancé of his cousin.

Lauzun was once more taken to the Bastille, and then to Pignerol where Fouquet was incarcerated. The meeting of the two men, who had both touched the topmost heights of splendour only to be flung to the lowest depths of misery, in the dungeon of Pignerol, makes a striking tableau. There he remained for ten years.

It is convenient to conclude his story here. Mademoiselle, now aging, was given to understand that Lauzun would be released if she settled the Principality of Dombes, the County of Eu, and the Duchy of Aumale, on the little illegitimate Duc du Maine, the favourite son of Louis XIV and La Montespan. So infatuated was she still that she agreed to this royal blackmail, but as she had assigned the property to Lau-

zun in the documents that were drawn up as preliminaries to the marriage, Lauzun's ratification was necessary. The fiery little man, not yet cowed, at first refused his signature; but eventually he was persuaded to obey the wishes of the king and Mademoiselle. It is supposed that after his liberation he secretly married Mademoiselle. In 1685 he went to England to the court of James II, where his life continued to be one of unbroken adventure. When William of Orange ascended the throne, Lauzun brought the queen of James II, and their little son, to Calais; James followed, and the royal fugitives were installed in the palace of Saint-Germain. In the autumn of 1689 Lauzun was put in command of the expedition to Ireland, and fought in the unlucky battle of the Boyne which blasted James's hopes and placed William firmly in his seat. He returned to France, but was not restored to favour; and he died in 1723.

And now the French war with Holland was being prepared. With its causes we will deal later, but, while the powers were lining up for battle, Henrietta, sister of Charles II, wife of Philippe d'Orléans, usually called Madame, suddenly died. The event was startling and there was some ground for the suspicion that she was poisoned.

A French alliance with England against Holland was necessary. The British people would probably have opposed such a union had it been possible, but

Louis had only to beckon to Charles II, for the English king was the pensioner of France and could scarcely refuse his help. Yet the negotiations might be delicate, and Henrietta could usefully assist in bringing over her brother to the side of France against the United Provinces.

A meeting was arranged at Dover where splendid fêtes were arranged. Louis accompanied his sister-in-law who was to serve as intermediary, and the whole French court followed. It was an imposing procession of the richest nobles, the most elegant women, well-equipped armies. Madame rejoiced in that she had reconquered her former influence. She was almost equal to the queen in rank. Behind them rode, in the same carriage, the two mistresses of the king, Louise de La Vallière and La Montespan; and sometimes, said the whispers of the court, they all rode together, the king and "the three queens," in the same carriage.

Diplomacy was as much an affair of pleasure as of interest, and with Madame there went a charming young woman who had been selected by Louis XIV, who well knew the weakness of Charles, for the post of *séductrice plénipotentiaire*. She too had her instructions—secret instructions—and her mission was important and apparently difficult, since Charles had already several recognized mistresses. In May 1670, Madame and her companions left for Dover. The

negotiations were successful. The charming young person fulfilled her rôle admirably. A few years later she became an English duchess and was rewarded handsomely for her work by the French king. The treaty of alliance between Louis and Charles was concluded. It declared that the two kings had resolved to mortify the pride of the United Provinces, and to destroy the power of a nation which had often shown the blackest ingratitude towards its creators, and had even had the audacity to pose as a sovereign arbiter and judge: therefore their Majesties would declare and make war conjointly, with all their forces of sea and land, and neither of them would sign a treaty of peace or of truce without the consent of the other.

Madame on her return was received at Calais with the greatest honours, and set out for Paris.

To render the dramatic sequel comprehensible, we must explain the curious relations of Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, the husband of Madame, with the Chevalier de Lorraine. The most serious historians as well as the memorialists of the time have not hesitated to accuse the Chevalier de Lorraine of *mœurs contre nature.* Monsieur was a dark lively little man who was not addicted to manly amusements. His manners were effeminate. He loved to employ rouge and powder; to wear lavish ornaments; to disguise himself as a woman. In the frivolous court, filled with light ladies, he was never suspected of the common follies. "It is

not you, Monseigneur," said one of these ladies, "who dishonour the women—it is the women who dishonour you." And it is solemnly recorded that when a lady, determined on his conquest, deliberately demanded graces which a gallant man could hardly refuse, he languidly asked permission first to put on his gloves.

Around Monsieur were a number of elegant young men. Among them was Philippe de Lorraine-Armagnac, a Knight of Malta, known as the Chevalier de Lorraine. The chevalier was good-looking, and it is recorded that Madame was jealous of him. She availed herself of her influence over the king to have him sent into exile.

After the chevalier had left the court on the orders of the king, there was a stormy scene between the two brothers. Monsieur wept and fell at the feet of Louis. Louis was not to be moved. It was time to make an end of the scandal. For some time Monsieur brooded, but Madame assured him that she had nothing to do with the exile of the chevalier, and Louis offered him compensation. So the quarrel was patched up, and the young chevalier lived in Italy.

Monsieur was not, in his way, devoid of jealousy. There were rumours of Madame's behaviour in England which Philippe resented. Yet it is improbable that they seriously affected the conduct of Monsieur. Madame was triumphant in her court of Saint-Cloud

after her return from her visit to her brother, when the tragedy suddenly occurred.

It was on June 29. Madame had a long conversation with Monsieur. She saw Madame de La Fayette, and told her that she had had a good night and was in excellent health. Throughout the day she was unusually gay. In the evening after drinking a cup of *chicorée*—her favourite beverage—she lay down and slept. Madame de La Fayette noticed a curious change come over her. She awoke and looked so strange that Monsieur asked her if she was not well. She reassured him. Madame called for another cup of *chicorée*, and as she drank it she was seized with sharp pains. Her attendants carried her into her chamber and put her to bed. She was convulsed with agony. Her doctor was called, and he declared that Madame was suffering from an ordinary colic. It was obvious that this was not the truth. Madame cried that she was poisoned, doubtless by mistake, and she demanded an antidote. Various remedies were tried, but without avail. The curé of Saint-Cloud was called in haste. Other doctors were convoked but their presence only added to the confusion. Madame moaned with her ladies about her bed. The king was notified. The queen, the Comtesse de Soissons, Madame de La Vallière, and Madame de Montespan, hurried to her side. The Ambassador of England also approached her, and she spoke to him in English. The

word *poison* was heard. Bossuet exhorted her to think only of God. He presented the crucifix to her, and as she placed it on her lips she died.

It was impossible that there should not be misgivings. Everybody felt that the Chevalier de Lorraine had avenged himself. Even Monsieur did not escape the calumny of the court. The Marquis d'Effiat, another favourite of Monsieur, had been observed before the cupboard in which the *chicorée* was kept. The king sent for Purnon, the maître d'hôtel of Madame. According to doubtful accounts of the strange interrogatory, Louis began by assuring Purnon that if he told the truth he would be pardoned, but if he told the smallest lie he would be executed. Thereupon Purnon confessed that Madame had been poisoned. "By whom?" asked the king, and the reply came, "By the Chevalier de Lorraine." It was alleged that he had sent the poison from Rome to the Marquis d'Effiat and the Comte de Beuvron, his friends. Why had not other persons who had drunk the tisane been poisoned? Because it was the cup which Madame habitually used and not the *chicorée* itself, which had been tampered with. Then came the crucial question. "Does my brother know anything of the plot?" "No, Sire," responded Purnon. At this response the king emitted a sigh of relief. In all the horrors of that evening there was at least this consolation, that Monsieur was not implicated in the poisoning of the Eng-

lish princess who had once held the heart of Louis. The matter was hushed up as far as possible. Bossuet delivered his most powerful funeral oration in which he cried with an eloquence that thrilled the court, and made all his hearers weep:

"*Madame se meurt, Madame est morte!*"—"*O nuit désastreuse, nuit effroyable, où retentit tout à coup comme un éclat de tonnerre, cette étonnante nouvelle, Madame se meurt! Madame est morte!*"

Chapter Thirteen

PASSAGE OF THE RHINE

THE medals began it. There were doubtless many reasons why France should make war on Holland: there are always many reasons for making war if war is considered a proper weapon of national policy: any diplomatist can discover a dozen pretexts while you wait. But the medals began it. Louis's susceptibility had grown inordinately. His morbidity could not suffer mockery. His megalomania was Neronic. He would burn up the world to avenge a slight. With the passage of the years, the tendencies which were given their first impulse when the contemptuous pressure placed on the juvenile monarch was removed, had rapidly developed. From a sense of his inferiority, Louis had advanced to an irritable belief in his superiority. It was not an ordinary superiority, such as most men secretly pride themselves upon. It was a superiority superior to all superiorities. Louis was Apollo, Louis was the Sun, which warmed and moved the Earth. Without him the globe would perish: his centre was France but his rays vivified every land.

Let us not doubt this glory of Louis! The unhappy Dutch did. They laughed over satirical pamphlets which showed Louis as a sun of comic opera. They struck medals which were injurious to his grandeur. One of these medals represented Van Bueningen, the republican envoy at Aix-la-Chapelle, as Joshua arresting the sun. The motto was: "In conspectu mes stetit sol." The sun was clearly Louis. That was his emblem—a sun shedding his beams on the universe—and beneath the emblem these words: "Nec pluribus impar."

Louis responded, in this war of medals, by another medal which represented him at the head of his army. Around this medal was written "Unc solem, O Josué, sistere tempus adest."

There were other medals equally insulting. "It did not need more," says an old French historian, "to prick to the quick the *amour-propre* of a king accustomed to hear around him only a concert of praise, and for whom the greatest geniuses of the age exhausted all the forms of flattery. He resolved to punish these insolent republicans, these rich bourgeois, as they called the Dutch at the Court of Versailles, who pretended to lay down the law for France."

Louis could not forgive the intervention of Holland in the war of Flanders. It was the harder to forgive in that Louis must have been privately aware of his own pusillanimity in concluding the peace of

Aix-la-Chapelle, against the advice of Turenne and Condé, when he had the ball at his feet. Holland could not have stopped him had he been determined on conquest in 1668; for she had practically no army. The other members of the triple alliance of the Hague could have been disregarded. Sweden could have been bought off and the English ships, had they taken action, could not have prevented land operations.

Besides, Holland was wealthy; and while it was the French fashion to sneer at the *bourgeois enrichis*, Louis envied them their wealth. They had some control over Antwerp, the rival of Amsterdam, while Amsterdam itself was the most prosperous of the Northern ports. Colbert who showed a certain prudence, since he was building up navies and industries, and therefore tried to dissuade the king from attacking Holland, nevertheless hated these commercial competitors. He had tried to keep Dutch shipping out of the French ports. He had levied tariffs on imported goods. His system of protection was indeed largely directed against Holland. The situation of the United Provinces may well be compared to that of Venice during the Italian wars—Holland was the object of perpetual overtures and perpetual intrigues; her aid was sought but her power provoked jealousy; she was alternately the instigator and the victim of coalitions. The philosopher, Leibnitz, had tried to turn the attention of Louis towards the East, and particularly towards

Egypt. There, he said in effect, is an excellent outlet for superfluous energies, and a glorious field for irresistible ambitions; and it is not necessary to seek glory at the expense of European neighbours. The government of the Low Countries had tried to placate the French by offering to make of Belgium an independent republic. But the vanity of Louis was not to be diverted by the promise of Egypt or of Belgium. These republicans, who insulted him and thwarted him, were Protestants; and Louis's dislike of the Protestants was already considerable. They did not—heretics as they were—believe in God-given kings, holding divine power, any more than they believed in God-appointed popes, also holding divine power. They were a trading oligarchy; and although Colbert was endeavouring to make France a trading country, Louis and his court could have only contempt for a country governed by traders. Louvois encouraged the king by vaunting his army; and Lyonne cleverly detached the allies of Holland from their allegiance. Victory appeared certain, and on this occasion counsels of prudence did not avail. Once more Louis broke away from the traditional diplomacy of France. His personal feelings induced him to disregard the precepts of Henri IV and Richelieu. The real enemy of France was to see the French pushing far beyond their frontiers, into territories which, while Spain possessed a footing in

the Netherlands, could not possibly be brought under permanent French control.

Sweden was bribed. So was England—or rather Charles II. The princes of the Rhine were won to neutrality and some of them promised to aid France. The emperor was not to be feared. After he had thus isolated Holland, Lyonne died, and was succeeded by an indifferent diplomatist, Arnault de Pomponne.

Although Holland was formidable on sea, she had scarcely twenty thousand soldiers. As a good republican country she was suspicious of the army, and moreover she had not contemplated war. Since their enfranchisement from Spain, the Dutch had never been engaged in a serious conflict, and the energy which they had shown in their fight for independence was now shown in commercial enterprises. They were bent on developing their colonies and on selling their goods. Their ships were necessary, but their army was regarded as superfluous; though among the available troops were, it is true, two or three good regiments of Germans conducted by the Prince of Orange. The division of parties increased the weakness of Holland. One party would have made William of Orange Stadholder; but the brothers De Witt had abolished this office. The war was to give the young prince his opportunity; for, while the De Witts were ready to submit to the French, he set his face against surrender, and was upheld by the people. Indeed, in June 1672,

he was elected Stadholder of Zeeland and of Holland; and was appointed Captain-General of the Union. He has been severely blamed—and not without reason—for doing nothing to prevent the murder of the brothers De Witt by the mob at the Hague in August of that year, a profitable murder for him since it made him supreme in the state.

The British fleet of sixty ships under the Duke of York joined the French fleet of thirty vessels. The Dutch fleet of De Ruyter met them in Solebay and fought desperately: the great Dutch admiral drew off with honours. But on land the French mustered more than a hundred thousand men. The Bishop of Münster, the Elector of Cologne, and the other German princes, provided more troops. Vauban was with the army to direct the sieges of which Louis was so fond. Turenne and Condé were among the French generals. Despite the appearance of the enigmatic figure of William of Orange, afterwards King of England, in the field, Louis, who himself led his army, appeared to have an easy task.

Napoleon has described the passage of the Rhine by Louis as an operation of the fourth order; and his verdict must stand. Yet at the time it was celebrated as an unparalleled feat, and the praises of Louis were extravagantly sung. The king divided the troops into four corps. The first, with which were Monsieur and Turenne, assembled on the Sambre. The second, un-

der Condé, was at Sedan. Another contingent, led by the Maréchal de Créqui, assembled at Maestricht. The Duc de Luxembourg was instructed to support the Cologne and Münster armies.

The king left Saint-Germain at the end of April 1672, to join his army at Charleroi. Condé marched by the Ardennes. Four towns were at once taken without resistance, and the king sent the news to Paris where there was great rejoicing. As soon as the Rhine was crossed, Holland would surely be at the mercy of the French. William of Orange, the true successor of William the Silent who had liberated Holland from Spain, melancholy, taciturn, cold, phlegmatic, persevering, courageous, but whose ability consisted not so much in his readiness to give battle as his skill in avoiding decisive battle, saw the danger. He had traced his lines of defence on the other side of the river, but he quickly recognized that it was impossible to defend them, and he withdrew. The French held a council of war, and it was decided to cross the river without delay, and to cut all communication between the Hague and Amsterdam. There was practically nothing to oppose this passage. At first it was intended to construct a bridge of boats, but the peasants informed Condé that the river was at that season very low, and that there was, near Toll Huys, a practicable ford. Condé asked an officer to essay the ford, and the Comte de Guiche who had

been greatly afflicted by the death of Madame and asked nothing better than a post of peril, volunteered. His audacity was crowned with success, and his report provoked the decision to take the army across the Rhine on the night of the eleventh of June.

At three o'clock in the morning the army found itself on the bank of the river. On the opposite side were only a few Dutch regiments. Guiche showed the way. A cavalry regiment followed. The king was prepared to imitate them, and had he done so the feat would have deserved some of the panegyrics which were afterwards heard. But Condé was suffering from gout and wished to cross the Rhine by boat. He could scarcely do so if the king passed before him on horseback. Louis agreed to wait, though according to the poem of Boileau, he complained of *sa grandeur qui l'attachait au rivage.*

Only a few horsemen were drowned. The Dutch fired a number of shots but offered no serious resistance. Those shots, however, made two distinguished victims. The young Duc de Longueville, nephew of Condé, hurried up at the last moment, and was taken on the boat of the prince. He was flushed with wine, and on arriving on the opposite bank was indignant that there remained no opportunity of rendering conspicuous services. He threw himself on the handful of Dutch soldiers who were asking for quarter, crying: "No quarter for these swine!" He fired his pistol,

killed an officer, and the men, believing that there was no hope for them, fired on the king's troops. The Duc de Longueville fell dead. At the same time a Dutch captain ran up to Condé and put a pistol to his head. The prince struck at the Dutchman's hand and turned aside the bullet but his wrist was broken. Then the French commenced to massacre the Dutch.

Louis in a letter to the queen censured the folly of the impetuous Longueville. "With a little patience," he wrote, "not a single man would have escaped, and there would have been no bloodshed. Instead of which, his impetuosity cost us dear."

It was not until the next day that the king and his household crossed the river on the pontoons of Vauban. Such was the famous passage of the Rhine, exalted by poetry and painting. It has been compared to the exploits of Alexander, but in fact nothing opposed the passage but the river itself, and this was unquestionably fordable. On the other hand, Louis has been attacked as showing cowardice because he did not lead his soldiers across. It would be wrong to denigrate Louis on this ground; there was no good reason why he should have placed himself at the head of his cavalry; it was not his business to rush uselessly into danger. All that one objects to is the foolish adulation which has been heard. Around all the acts of Louis has been cast an unjustifiable glamour.

The crossing of the Rhine has been hailed as

prodigious, though it was only a commonplace operation. It was a fresh occasion for Ludovician idolatry. The current reports represented the feat as a new edition of the passage of the Red Sea. It was believed that a mighty host had swum across the river in flood, braving entrenched armies, defying deadly artillery, capturing an impregnable fort. The effect was doubtless excellent from the French point of view. It enheartened the soldiers, roused the citizens to enthusiasm, and discouraged the Dutch, who thereupon yielded province after province without putting up any real defence. Condé was obliged to quit the army because of his wound, but Turenne went from capture to capture. Every day brought news of another victory. Forty towns and villages were occupied in twenty-two days. The provinces of Gelderland, Overyssel, and Utrecht received the conquerors. "Give me fifty horsemen," said one officer to Turenne, "and I will take ten towns." Advance guards were at the very gates of Amsterdam. At Muyden were the sluices which permitted the flooding of Holland. These should have been instantly secured. But at this crucial moment there was delay. It was a delay that is almost inexplicable. It is a delay that allowed the Dutch to recover themselves, and to save the country which Louis had all but won.

Every system has its defects. Louvois's system of careful ordering, of slow progression, of solid bases

and safe lines of communication was cumbersome: it did not permit risks; it was sure, but it was slow; and in this case time was the essence of the French victory. Condé was a bold dashing general, but he was *hors de combat.* Turenne was a remarkable strategist, who knew how to reckon accurately the advantages and disadvantages of his position, but he was not averse to the dilatoriness of siege work. As for Louis, he was certainly not a brilliant warrior; one cannot picture him rushing into the thick of battle, like his grandfather, Henri IV, the white plumes of his helmet floating as a banner. He was, even in his own time, dubbed a "review general," a "parade-ground soldier," and in his campaigns what delighted him most was the ponderous investment of a fortress, and its inevitable reduction. The operation was almost mathematical; it was precise, methodical, and a time-table could be prepared in advance. There were, indeed, rules of the game. It was like duelling. The besieged captain was not expected to put up a desperate resistance, he was not called upon to surprise the enemy; he was simply to hold out a respectable number of days, until foodstuffs ran sufficiently low, and munitions were more or less exhausted, in order to save his honour, and be treated with the utmost consideration by the victors. The military science of the age was of this character, but Louis, who was particularly orderly, emphasized its most lackadaisical side in the war with

Holland. Ordinary life for him was governed by strict etiquette; and war, too, should be governed by etiquette. He proceeded with proper dignity; even in fighting there must be decorum; there must be nothing to ruffle his good opinion of himself. Had Louis taken the chances of the field, he would, like other generals, have sometimes lost; but Louis, obsessed by his unhappy boyhood, would have contemplated the prospect of a personal reverse with a horror that only inferiority-haunted minds can realize. When he was himself engaged on a military expedition he would prefer to do nothing rather than incur risks. And to do nothing, to waste time, was the fatal thing in the Dutch campaign. Holland was at his mercy, but he hesitated and was lost. The flood-gates of Muyden were opened.

Chapter Fourteen

WAR WITH HOLLAND

JAN DE WITT sent emissaries to the French camp to sue for peace. Louis treated them arrogantly. Nothing could satisfy him but the cession of Dutch possessions in Flanders, Brabant, and Germany; and the abandonment of fortresses on the Rhine and the Meuse; and liberty for French commerce in all Dutch ports; and the public exercise of the Catholic religion throughout the Provinces; and the payment of a large indemnity. The States-General might have submitted even to these conditions had Louis pursued his conquests. But Louis was quietly taking towns which he would have to give up again, and weakening his own army by detaching garrisons for these towns. At the same time he released, for a small ransom, twenty-eight thousand Dutch prisoners.

In the meantime the Orange party, opposed to the Republican party, was accusing the De Witts of treason. Jan, the Grand Pensionary, and Cornelius, the great admiral, were killed by the mob; and William, the Prince of Orange, who was then twenty-two years

old, obtained supreme power. He used it to save Holland. He decided upon an extraordinary measure. It was a measure that could hardly have been taken in cold blood, but the passions of the Dutch were aroused. The same patriotic sentiments which caused them unjustly to massacre the De Witts, enabled them, without shrinking from the consequences, to open the sluices and to break the dikes which kept back the water of the ocean from the soil of Holland, below sea level. Immediately the country was flooded, the crops were destroyed, the cattle perished, entire towns were swallowed up, but the march of Louis, which had been so dilatory, was effectively stopped.

This act has been compared with the burning of Moscow which made an end of Napoleon's march on Russia and left his army to suffer the tragedy of a disastrous retreat.

Louis returned to Paris leaving Turenne in command. He found the Parisians erecting the Arc de Triomphe of the Porte Saint-Denis, to celebrate the capture of three provinces and forty towns; these provinces and towns had been evacuated before the monument was finished.

Europe began to be alarmed. Holland had narrowly escaped. Whose turn would it be next? William was sending out envoys to the Powers to arouse them against France. Frederick William, the Elector of Brandenburg, founder of the Prussian monarchy,

went to the assistance of Holland, but was checked by Turenne. Condé returned to his army, and in Alsace held back the Germans. The Rhine princes were abandoning France. Spain was allying herself with Holland. William recovered some of the towns that had been lost; though the Duc de Luxembourg, during the winter, when the water froze over the submerged countryside, made some advance into Holland, but was obliged to retreat when the thaw set in.

Then jealousies showed themselves. Louvois could not bear that Turenne should be too successful; and therefore he ordered him back to take up winter quarters. Turenne appealed to the king, who gave him permission to pursue the Elector of Brandenburg and force him to become neutral. In 1673—August 30—the emperor and the King of Spain signed a treaty with Holland at the Hague. This entirely changed the situation. Montecuculli was at the head of the Austrian troops. The Duc de Lorraine was bringing up a strong contingent. Spain was about to attack with all her forces.

The war was no longer a France-Dutch war: it was a European war. Louis had to change his plans. His troops were withdrawn from Holland, and his conquests were nullified. Montecuculli joined hands with William, and the Allies seized Bonn. Sweden intervened, but a Peace Congress at Cologne broke down when the emperor arrested one of the plenipotentiaries.

The British Parliament forced Charles to tear up the treaty with France, and as might have been expected, this defection caused some of the German potentates to change sides. All Louis's preparations had come to nothing. Europe was ranged against him.

The French forces were divided into three parts. Louis was to overrun the Franche-Comté. Turenne was to occupy Alsace. Condé was to maintain the Flanders line. The king has himself told of the expedition which was to win Franche-Comté permanently for France: "I attacked the town and citadel of Besançon. The situation of these places is so extraordinary, the approaches are so difficult, the country is so uneven and the roads so bad, that it needed a fierce application to surmount the obstacles which were naturally augmented by the continual rain and the stormy weather experienced during the siege. The town is fairly big. It is separated in two by the river Doubs, which passes at the foot of a high rock, on which is the citadel, and encloses it entirely on two sides. . . . There are two mountains which command the town. . . . Some of the enemy troops which were in the province entered Besançon when they heard that my army was on the march. They were few in number but in very good condition. I had only twelve battalions and five or six thousand horses: when I arrived I found the place invested by the Duc d'Enghien." The king's men attacked with vigour spite

of the rain. The besieged put up a sturdy resistance. Nevertheless the town capitulated in a few days, and the citadel was soon carried. Dôle likewise fell to Louis two weeks later. Then Louis returned gloriously to Fontainebleau; for his absences were never of long duration. It was enough for him that he was periodically present at the capitulation of a town.

Condé was face to face with William in Flanders: William's army was larger, but it was composed of Germans, Dutch, and Spanish. If William obtained the decisive victory here, he could march into the heart of France. For Condé it was hard to remain on the defensive; but he entrenched himself on the Sambre, near Charleroi. William tried to induce the French to begin the onslaught, and made a strategical retreat at Senef. Condé fell on the Spanish rearguard and defeated it. William turned and obliged Condé to fling himself on the main army. The French prince was not loath. With his usual impetuosity he dashed his army to pieces. Certainly he inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, but his own were still heavier. It is estimated that both sides lost from twelve to thirteen thousand men. It was certainly not William who carried the day, but a few more exploits of this kind would have finished the French.

When Condé returned to the court, the king received him at the head of the great staircase of Versailles. The prince mounted slowly because of the

gout from which he suffered. "Sire, I ask pardon for keeping you waiting." "My cousin," replied Louis —and this grandiloquent kind of compliment is characteristic of the monarch—"when one is covered with laurels one marches with difficulty."

Turenne in Alsace was brilliant. Louvois had only given him a small force and appears to have desired his defeat. But Turenne manœuvred remarkably. His aim was to prevent a junction of the Allies. In carrying out this object he laid waste the Palatinate. What he could not seize he burnt. The peasants in despair committed atrocities, and Turenne took terrible reprisals. The Elector wrote to Turenne reproaching him with these abuses, and offered, since he had no army, to encounter Turenne in single combat. In his reply Turenne denied that he had given orders to lay waste the Palatinate, but the ruthless destruction of the district surely remains a blot on Turenne's fame.

The Allies were mustering their forces. They entered Alsace. The French believed that Lorraine and Champagne would be invaded. Louis appealed to the whole nobility; they should call up the *ban* and the *arrière-ban.* Again Louvois attempted to give orders to Turenne; telling him to abandon Alsace. Again Turenne appealed to the king; he wanted to remain, believing that the great German army, commanded by six chiefs, was weaker than it seemed to be. Louis again allowed Turenne to behave as he pleased. Alsace

was successfully defended but when winter came Turenne recrossed the Vosges to take up his quarters in Lorraine.

The Germans then advanced into Alsace. Thinking there was nothing more to fear they scattered throughout the whole province. They camped in little groups wherever it was most convenient, wherever the food was easy to come by. During the winter there could be no fighting—so they supposed. But Turenne, in December, when the frost was most rigorous, quietly divided up his forces, and sent them, contingent by contingent, each ignorant of the others' movements, to march along the Vosges; and finally, after twenty days on almost impracticable roads, they found themselves, to their great astonishment, united, in the plain of Belfort, in the very midst of the quarters of the Duc de Lorraine. If the French were amazed, the enemy was stupefied. Turenne fell hip and thigh upon the imperialists, shattering them at Colmar, Mulhouse, Turkheim, and driving them over the Rhine.

Turenne returned to the leadership of the Rhineland army the next spring. This time he had an opponent whose renown was no less than his own. The emperor had been persuaded to place Montecuculli at the head of the Allied forces. Here indeed was a duel of giants. How was it possible for Turenne or Montecuculli to lose? The two best generals of Europe

were matched, and Europe, forgetting what was at stake, watched the contest with the same sporting interest as we might watch a prize-fight for the world's championship. They faced each other for six weeks. They sought for openings and found none. They had the utmost respect for each other, and would do nothing rash. Finally they met on July 27, 1675. The soundest military judges hold that Turenne cleverly secured the better position and should have won. But as he was inspecting the position he was struck by a stray shot which also in its flight cut off the arm of the Marquis de Saint-Hilaire.

So died the greatest of French captains. The son of Saint-Hilaire bent over his father with tears in his eyes. "It is not for me, my son, that you should weep," said his father, "but for that great man."

Rarely has the death of any man caused such consternation. Montecuculli entered Alsace by Strasbourg. The Duc de Lorraine took Trèves. Louis, while the enemy was triumphant, gave a splendid burial to Turenne in the royal sepulchre of Saint-Denis. (The tomb was afterwards removed to the Invalides.) Eight marshals were created to take the place of Turenne: the epigrammatists found in this promotion an excellent subject of satire, and they called the eight new marshals the "small change of M. de Turenne."

A casual shot completely turned the fortunes of

France. The tide which had flowed strongly to triumph ebbed swiftly to disaster. While Montecuculli advanced there were uprisings in Bordeaux, Toulouse, Limoges, Nevers; and in Brittany the revolt was grave and general. A spendthrift policy of grandeur had necessitated heavy taxation, and France groaned under the impositions of Colbert.

Créqui succeeded Turenne and was beaten by the old Duc de Lorraine. He took his army into Trèves which was besieged. His officers surrendered against his will. The taking of Trèves was the last exploit of the bizarre Duc de Lorraine: he died, leaving his rights and hopes to his nephew Charles, the brother-in-law of the Emperor.

It was imperative that France should strike a blow to recover lost prestige. Louis ordered Condé to Alsace, and the once impetuous prince was now obliged to engage in a war of manœuvres. Finally Montecuculli recrossed the Rhine. Condé retired to Chantilly where he lived for the rest of his days among men of letters—notably La Fontaine—and cultivated piety.

On the sea there were bloody combats. Messina in Sicily had revolted against Spain, and placed itself under the protection of France. Louis sent a fleet commanded by the Duc de Vivonne, brother of La Montespan, at this time the reigning favourite. But the real commander was Duquesne, who had sailed the seas in merchant ships, who had been a corsair, who

had served in the Swedish navy, and who entered the French navy, where he was denied the highest rank because he was a Protestant. He now encountered the Dutch Admiral de Ruyter and the united fleets of Spain and Holland. In a fight off Syracuse, Ruyter was killed, and the enemy fleet was destroyed.

France was the master of the Mediterranean. And now Admiral d'Estrées fitted out ships to encounter the Dutch in the vicinity of the Antilles. The new broom—the French navy—was sweeping the seas clean.

In 1676 Louis was present at sieges in Flanders. There was always glory to be won at a comparatively low price in siege work. When William of Orange brought his army into the presence of the French army at Valenciennes, they looked at each other and decided not to fight. The prudence of William was dictated by the Spanish generals; but it was part of his method to annoy his antagonist without provoking definitive results. But Louis, so fond of sieges, lost his last opportunity of participating in a pitched battle. Never did he win a pitched battle. His brother a year later was to beat William at Cassel; and Louis never forgave him for it.

After two months of parading the king returned to Versailles, and the war dragged on. Schomberg and Luxembourg were opposed to William, and Charles, Duc de Lorraine. Créqui conducted a skilful cam-

paign. Lost ground was recovered. But the war, begun in 1672, with the intention of finishing Holland at a blow, had now lasted six years. Originally it had been between France and helpless Holland. Now all Europe was dragged in and Holland was stronger than at the beginning. Victory swayed from side to side, and victory did not seem to matter to either side. William had shown that one way of winning wars is that of losing battles. Enormous expenditure, frightful losses, had been incurred to no purpose. Holland desired peace. So did France. The emperor and the German princes were willing to continue in the hope of retaking Alsace and restoring Lorraine to the Duc Charles. Spain would have liked to recover Franche-Comté. England was angry with Charles II, and the nonchalant king was obliged to go so far in showing English friendship for William as to give his consent to the marriage of Mary, his niece, daughter of the Duke of York, with the Dutch stadholder—a marriage which was afterwards to elevate William to the British throne and raise up for France an implacable enemy.

Peace was concluded by the Treaty of Nimwegen in August 1678. Holland came well out of the war since France actually consented to abolish the tariffs which had pressed upon the Dutch, thus reversing Colbert's policy. Spain was weaker and was compelled to abandon Franche-Comté and various towns

in the Low Countries. The arrangements that were made by Louis were intended to give France a fresh ring of covering fortifications on the north and the east; and France began to take on its present conformation. Vauban strengthened these places in Flanders and on the Rhine. In this treaty-making the dominant thought was the security of France. The treaties of Westphalia and the Pyrenees were completed by the Treaty of Nimwegen. Though the gains of France were moderate, the French frontier was, from a military point of view, undoubtedly improved.

In these peace negotiations Louis appeared as the dictator of Europe, and it was somehow agreed to forget that he had entirely missed his objective, which was the subjugation of little Holland. There was renewed enthusiasm. Military conquests fire the imagination of the French, and the people gave themselves up to rejoicings. This was the supreme moment of Louis's life. Paris had already raised two triumphal arches. It now conferred the title of Louis-le-Grand on the king.

A series of marriages must here be recorded. There was first—during the war—a few years after the death of Henrietta, the second marriage of Monsieur, the brother of the king, with the Palatine princess, Elizabeth Charlotte de Bavière. To her lively memoirs we owe many glimpses of the court life of

Louis, though her statements have sometimes to be considerably discounted. She has described herself as ugly, with irregular features, small eyes, short nose, long straight lips, hanging cheeks, a large visage, undersized and fat in body. Such frankness is disarming. We are drawn towards a woman who can see herself as she is. She does not appear to be troubled by her physical defects. She laughs at them. "Probably one could not find worse hands than mine. The King has often made the remark to me, and has made me laugh heartily; for, as I could not conscientiously flatter myself on having anything pretty about me, I took the part of being the first to laugh at my ugliness. That method has succeeded, and I have often found something to laugh at."

What a singular person to come among the handsome and elegant women of the court! The feminine tastes of Monsieur were so inexistent that he could not have minded overmuch, though his *amour-propre* seems to have been slightly hurt. But the princess knew how to hold her own. The new Madame, observing that one of the court ladies was being witty at her expense, took her by the hand, drew her into a corner, and said, "Madame, you are extremely witty, and you know how to please the king and Monsieur because they are accustomed to you. But I have just arrived, and I warn you that I get angry when I am mocked at. That is why I want to give you a little

advice. If you hold your tongue we shall get on well together. If you don't, I shall not reply, but I will see that your husband loses his post."

She made herself, in one manner or another, respected. When Monsieur proposed that they should sleep apart, she agreed with alacrity. "It was," she says, "very disagreeable to sleep with Monsieur. He could not bear to be touched during his sleep. I was therefore obliged to lie on the edge of the bed, from which more than once I have fallen like a sack."

But Louis was troubled about her ignorance of etiquette. He had become a slave to etiquette, and Madame upset the arrangements which he had carefully elaborated. Therefore, for a long time, he never let her alone in public. He sat by her side, and every time that she, according to the rules, should rise, Louis nudged her with his elbow. Madame obeyed the signal and arose.

Then in 1679 Louis married the daughter of his brother, Marie-Louise d'Orléans, to King Charles II of Spain. Still more surprisingly he married Mademoiselle de Blois, daughter of La Vallière, and his own illegitimate child, to the Prince de Conti. In the same year was signed the contract of marriage of the dauphin with the Princess Marie-Anne-Christine de Bavière, and this marriage was celebrated by a series of fêtes of unparalleled sumptuosity which lasted two months.

The opulence of Louis at this time was at its height. He considered splendour as obligatory. While the new fortresses were being built, the work at Versailles and on other royal constructions was pushed forward as never before. Then it was that troops which would otherwise have been idle, were employed in making roads and building edifices. As the soldiers could satisfy no further caprices of Louis in the field, they were engaged in satisfying the caprices of Louis at Versailles, for it was in this period that the unhappy experiment of conveying water from the Eure to Versailles was conducted: epidemics broke out among the soldiers and some of the regiments were reduced by half. Even war was less fatal than Versailles.

Chapter Fifteen

PASSION, POISON, AND SUDDEN DEATH

THERE is no doubt that the affair of poisons and of witchcraft undermined the position of La Montespan. How far she was culpably mixed up in it is problematical. Perhaps she was innocent of any criminal participation in the strange practices of La Voisin, the cunning old woman who was ready to supply poisons or exercise her magical arts on behalf of the superstitious and wicked nobility.* It is probable that she employed love philtres and spells to capture Louis. These love philtres contained aphrodisiacs, such as cantharides, but they also contained the beastliest ingredients, such as Shakespeare enumerates in *Macbeth.* Louis himself was, it would seem, poisoned for years by these drugs. It is said that La Montespan assisted at the celebration of black mass; and that sometimes black mass was celebrated on her own naked body as altar. Moreover, just as Henrietta had died suddenly, either from poison or from—if the doctors

* See *Le Drame des Poisons,* by Funck-Brentano.

are to be believed—cholera, so did Mademoiselle de Fontanges, a young beauty who had attracted the attention of the king, likewise die in mysterious circumstances—so mysterious that Louis preferred no inquiry to be made, though whispering tongues hinted that La Montespan had good reason to rid herself of a rival.

It may be that La Montespan was implicated in these things, though no proof had been furnished that she was guilty of more than stupid credulity. The character of Louis's favourite was such that one may believe almost anything of her. She treated those who encroached on her position with the utmost cruelty. If anyone incurred her displeasure during her period of power, they were sure to be severely punished. Over Louis himself she wielded tyrannical sway. She spent his money prodigally and squandered it at gaming-tables. She bullied the king and seemed to delight in his suffering. Once more we have ample evidence of the secret feebleness of this king who was lording it over Europe but who was afraid of the mistress he had made and could unmake. When the marquise blustered, Louis was as helpless and confused as a chidden child. The memory of the old days of oppression and suppression came back to him. Against her hectoring he could make no resistance. Louis might reign over France but he could not reign over his own household. This shrew thought nothing of search-

ing the pockets of His Most Christian Majesty. This termagant thought nothing of upbraiding the king for omitting the names of her relatives from lists of promotions. All her family profited by her domination of Louis. She did much to force Louis into his extravagant wars. Her illegitimate children were legitimatized in defiance of scandal; and in the end they were set above the princes.

Whatever was her part in the La Voisin affair, that affair is far too characteristic of the times to be passed over in silence. Since the tragic death of Henrietta there had been many similar deaths, and Parisians talked openly of a bureau of magic, of a factory of poisons. Powder of succession—this was the frivolous name given to a mysterious poison which left no trace; it was used by those who were anxious to take up the inheritance of an obstinate relative who lingered too long on the scene. Modern writers suggest that the poison may have been arsenic. Whatever it was, it was produced and employed freely. There was the notorious case of La Brinvilliers who was condemned for poisoning and decapitated on the Place de Grève in 1676. And now there was Catherine Monvoisin, known as La Voisin, a celebrated fortune-teller who had established her reputation in the highest Parisian society. With her were associated La Vigoureux, another so-called sorceress, and two priests, Le Sage and D'Avaux. The police became active, and Louis was

compelled to form a *Chambre Ardente*. This was the name given under the *ancien régime* to certain courts of justice appointed to examine exceptional cases; particularly crimes of heresy and of poisoning. These chambers were covered with black hangings, and lit, even in the afternoon, by torches. The best known of them all was that which was called upon, in the reign of Louis XIV, to judge the *affaire des poisons*.

Parliament complained that its functions were being interfered with, but Parliament was answered that the crimes which were alleged might affect the highest personages, and a secret tribunal was therefore necessary. La Reynie, lieutenant of the police, was one of the presidents of the Chamber. The accused were interrogated secretly, but a great deal transpired.

Even Monsieur was suspected. Twice he had consulted La Voisin in the company of the Chevalier de Lorraine, the Comte de Beuvron, and the Marquis d'Effiat. On the first occasion it was to ascertain the truth about a confinement of Henrietta during her visit to England. On the second occasion Monsieur appears to have asked to see the devil. The queen may also have visited La Voisin, who read the cards for her. The Comtesse de Soissons, the superb Olympe, went many times. She is said to have brought locks of the king's hair, bits of his shirt, the parings of his nails, and so forth, with which

La Voisin could make a magic doll. Fouquet, before his arrest, was another of her clients. Bussy-Rabutin asked for a charm which would make his cousin, the Marquise de Sévigné, fall in love with him. Lauzun consulted her about his future. Madame de Bouillon demanded her aid in making herself more beautiful. The Duc de Luxembourg had a request to put to Satan. Of the Cardinal de Bouillon there is a strange story to the effect that he invoked supernatural aid to discover hidden treasure. For this purpose he wished to raise the phantom of Turenne. After many delays, many postponements, it was agreed that La Voisin should attempt to call up the phantom in the Basilica of Saint-Denis. Black mass was celebrated—black candles burnt—the crucifix was placed upside down —there was a tremendous thunder-clap—and a spectral figure appeared. But the treasure hunters received for their sacrilegious pains only the following speech: "Miserable wretches! My house, which many heroes have glorified, is now desecrated. Those who bear my name are disinherited of my glory, and within a century that name will be extinct. The treasure that I have left is my reputation, my victories. Search no other!" If this is not apocryphal, La Voisin certainly possessed a weird kind of humour.

The Duchesse de Bouillon was called before M. de la Reynie. "Madame la Duchesse," asked the police chief, "have you seen the devil? What did he look

like?" "I had not seen him hitherto, Monsieur; but I see him at this moment. He is very ugly, and he is disguised as a councillor of state."

As for the Comtesse de Soissons, she was warned that she had better leave the country, and accordingly she went to Brussels.

La Voisin and La Vigoureux were condemned to death—the first to be burnt alive, the second to be hanged. La Vigoureux offered to reveal many secrets if her life was spared. It was not; and she supported the most terrible tortures without making any disclosures. But, indeed; disclosures were not wanted. More than enough had been revealed. Louis was greatly troubled, not only because his own life had been menaced, but because he did not know upon what members of his household guilt might be fastened. La Montespan was not openly accused, but it was understood that she was deeply involved. She escaped the *Chambre Ardente*. She was not even invited to leave the court. But her influence was broken. She was merely, like La Vallière before her, lingering on. Besides, another woman was now gaining domination over Louis—the widow of the deformed comic poet Scarron, the governess of Louis's illegitimate children, the aging, pious Marquise de Maintenon.

In the year 1683 the queen died. Marie-Thérèse had effaced herself and had played a minor part in the life of Louis and in the life of France. Unques-

tionably she had real affection for her husband. The whole court was made aware of the peripeteia of their relationship. She suffered the infidelities of the king in silence; but she displayed satisfaction when he shared her bed. Her timidity was more marked as she advanced in age, and she was, unlike Louis's successive favourites, afraid of her spouse and did everything she could to please him. The Spanish princesses in general were notoriously ignorant but they had a certain manner that enabled them to carry their rank. Marie-Thérèse was, as we have already written, not blessed with beauty: she was short and stout with broken black teeth. But she could hold herself with dignity. Her tastes were simple. She ate all day long, and loved to play the games in vogue—games which she played badly and never won. The king did not love her but he esteemed her. Madame Caylus assures us that Louis experienced a tender sympathy with her in her dying hour but was not afflicted by her death; and two years later he secretly married Madame de Maintenon. With Madame de Maintenon the queen was always on friendly terms. She was aware of her husband's interest in Madame de Maintenon; but she regarded her as his good angel, while La Montespan she believed to be his bad angel.

Colbert, too, in the same year, after a well-filled life, passed on at the age of sixty-four. Perhaps it was time. There was developing a general hatred of

the man who had saved French finances, had built up French commerce and industry, had protected the sciences and the arts, had given France a navy, had exploited the French colonies, and incidentally had been the principal private servant of the king. But Louis now disliked him because Louvois, incorrigible war-maker, disliked him, and Madame de Maintenon, aware that his cold regard saw through her hypocrisy, disliked him. Moreover, the king could not help realizing that, despite the faults, the blunders of Colbert, he was the man who had truly contributed to the grandeur of the reign. At the beginning Louis had determined to be his own minister because he could not bear to be surpassed. Colbert had remained in a subordinate position if one compares his ostensible rank with that of Richelieu, with that of Mazarin, but nevertheless in his quiet way Colbert had indeed surpassed the king, and had aroused the unfailing jealousy of Louis for superior persons. Nor had Colbert any friends among the nobility. From humble origins, by strenuous work, he had become the "Très Haut et Très Puissant Seigneur, Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Chevalier, Marquis de Château Neuf-sur-Cher, Baron de Sceaux, Lignières, et austres lieux, Conseiller Ordinaire du Roi en tous Ses Conseils, Commandeur et Grand Trésorier de Ses Ordres, Ministre et Sécretaire d'État de la Marine, et des Commandements de Sa Majesté, Contrôleur Général

des Finances, Surintendant et Ordonnateur Général des Bâtiments." This was much for the dark-browed secretary of Mazarin. The people equally detested Colbert because they blamed him for the war expenditure, the peace expenditure on royal buildings, the heavy burden of taxation, and the misery into which they had been plunged. Colbert had, in fact, tried to show the king that the people were in deep distress and he had advised economy. But it was useless to oppose the prodigality of Louis, who considered himself absolute master of the life and goods of his subjects, and who had told Madame de Maintenon that a king dispenses charity by spending largely. A heart-breaking task had been put upon Colbert, and he was impotent to prevent further financial confusion, while the tariff concessions to the Dutch were undoing what he had done for French industry and commerce. Worn out, the dying man refused to receive the king, and turning to the wall murmured: "I will not hear of him again. If I had done for God all that I have done for him, I should be sure of my salvation ten times over; but now I do not know what will become of me."

Dead, he was abandoned. He had no public funeral. After midnight, the body of Colbert was put in a dingy carriage, and conducted, under the escort of a few mounted police, to the Église Saint-

Eustache. Among the epigrams that were written on Colbert, who died of gravel, was the following:

"Ici, fut mis en sépulture,
Colbert, qui de douleur creva;
De son corps on fit l'ouverture;
Quatre pierres on y trouva,
Dont son cœur était la plus dure."

Four stones were found in his body, says this epigrammatist, of which his heart was the hardest.

Chapter Sixteen

THE SUMMIT OF POWER

LOUIS had now passed his fortieth year, and was at the summit of his power. He had become more and more self-centred and self-satisfied. Only now and again does one discern the strain of apprehension, of self-distrust, of subserviency to those who knew how to profit by his secret weakness. The lacunes in his education had never been filled in, but, surrounded as he was by men who knew their business, however narrow were their views, and with already a long experience of the art of government behind him, Louis had learned to place himself always in the most favourable light. He was bitterly criticized, but he chiefly heard the voice of flattery. If he was not a good soldier, as he imagined himself to be, he was acquainted with the composition of his army and its capacity. Unhappily he had discovered that he could make himself most impressive, most feared, and most lauded, by military enterprises and in his inordinate desire to be lauded, feared, and impressive, he was, in and out of season, tempted into military display. It is to be re-

marked that his advisers caught the trick of presenting plans to him as though they originated from the king himself. Most of those around him—with the exception of the women—who obtained any control over him were careful neither to appear to be persuasive or to be imperious. They understood his susceptibilities. They understood that Louis was always ready to take umbrage at the suspicion that he was not the supreme master working out his own will. They understood that this streak of inferiority existed and had not to be touched. Usually they ostentatiously gave him the palm, and allowed it to be understood that they were merely the artisans of his pleasure. It was not good to shine too brilliantly in the presence of the king. Louis could hardly reconcile himself to Condé and Turenne, who won him his victories; and after his brother triumphed at Cassel he was never given another opportunity of showing his military prowess. Louvois was wise enough to work through the king's favourites, but even this did not save him from the jealousy of Louis. Colbert, as we have seen, was indispensable, but was in disgrace because he was indispensable. When the ministers who had been bequeathed to Louis died, they were succeeded by nonentities who could not offend him by their superior ability. His diplomacy was ridiculously bad, and though, by sheer might, France maintained her place until the latter years of his reign, it is inconceivable

that students of diplomacy can sincerely praise the repeated foolish actions of Louis which were dictated by sheer vanity. He was helped, of course, by the unscrupulous practices of the times, and when he found that this or that method would not work, he did not hesitate to change it though he had to betray an ally.

His chief occupation was to play the king. To his conception of kingly dignity he sacrificed everything. He sacrificed his comfort; for a more uncomfortable life than the stiffly regulated life of Versailles it is hard to imagine. He sacrificed his personal preferences—particularly when he chose Marie-Thérèse for wife instead of Marie Mancini. He went through the daily performance of kingly ceremonial with obvious relish, and carried himself with conscious majesty. Part of his duties was to encourage poetry and painting and the fine arts generally. In default of sensitiveness, he cultivated *bon ton.*

At this time his heir was his legitimate son Louis —Monseigneur—known as the Grand Dauphin. The Grand Dauphin was a curious person who loved to wound those about him—a malicious young man who could, however, show amiability. When he appeared to be in good humour he was most mischievous. When he appeared to be in bad humour, he was most generous. It was not easy to say whether he was stupid or intelligent, for when he was stupid he would most

intelligently ridicule his own stupidity. Ambition in him was lacking. He did not disguise his dread of being called upon to succeed his father. To govern a kingdom would be a horrid interference with his liberty. For hours he would lie on a couch, tapping his feet with a cane. Never did he give an opinion upon politics, art, or literature. Yet sometimes he could talk well. Few favourites, men or women, were around him. Perhaps the only person that he liked was Madame de Maintenon.

He had two sons, Louis, Duc de Bourgogne, and Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, who subsequently, at a terrible cost, became King of Spain. These three princes —son and grandsons—were then the natural successors of Louis XIV.

Among the children of Louis by his mistresses —all legitimatized—were Mademoiselle de Blois (daughter of Mademoiselle de La Vallière), who married the Prince de Conti; the Duc du Maine, son of La Montespan, who was brought up by Madame de Maintenon, and married Louise de Condé; Mademoiselle de Nantes, who married the Duc de Bourbon; the second Mademoiselle de Blois, who married the Duc d'Orléans, the future regent; the Comte de Toulouse, who married Mademoiselle de Noailles. There were two others who died about this time—the Comte de Vermandois who, in spite of his tender years, was addicted to strange vices, the Comte du Vexin,

who died when he was eleven years old, but who, as he lay dying, told his governess, Madame de Maintenon, some terrible truths: "I have tried, Madame," he said, "to obey you out of deference to my parents, but those who say that you are frank and good are mistaken. Do not believe that it is because you care for my brother, the Duc de Maine, that I say this—it is because you have always encouraged dissimulation; and you have had the greatest detestation for Madame de Montespan [his mother] while she was heaping kindness on you." An extraordinary speech which indicates that the boy had a keen psychological sense.

As for M. du Maine, the king cherished him. So did his governess, Madame de Maintenon. But he had a sour character. When he was a child he had fallen and he was now lame. He was solitary and religious, but he entertained the highest ambitions. In his artificial manner he was often amusing, but he was, if we are to believe Saint-Simon, perverse, false, and intriguing.

Louis was not inaccessible to the people of his own world. He could be approached at many hours of the day. In the morning the valets removed from the royal bedroom the *encas*—that is to say, a cold collation prepared *in case* the king should be hungry, and the *mortier*—a silver vessel shaped like a mortar in which floated a lighted piece of yellow wax, and the

lit de veille—the bed of the principal *valet de chambre* who slept in the chamber of the king. Precisely on the stroke of the clock, Louis was awakened and received his doctors, and, until she died, his old nurse, who kissed him. Then the Grand Chamberlain was called in, and the Grandes Entrées began, and the shaving of the king was watched with unfailing respect. In his cabinet the king spent a little time with his children, while the courtiers waited in the galleries. After private audiences had been given, the king went to mass, and during the journey anybody could speak to him. Then came the council, and at one o'clock the meal which was called dinner. Louis was a great eater. The Palatine princess tells us that she has seen him eat four plates of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a big salad, two slices of ham, a plate of mutton, confectionery, fruit, and hard-boiled eggs. Sometimes Monseigneur attended these repasts, but he always stood. Obviously what was the rule for the son of the king was the rule for the cardinals and courtiers. But in the course of the meal Louis offered a tabouret to Monsieur his brother. When the king left the table it was possible for his courtiers to speak to him, and as he entered his cabinet he paused at the door as an invitation to those who had anything to communicate to him. Then he gave up some time to his children and his dogs. He changed clothes in the presence of the privileged persons

who were admitted by the First Gentleman of the Chamber.

As he went to his carriage it was proper to speak to him. But those who approached him took care to have no perfume, for he detested scents of all kinds. Here is an example of Louis's reaction from anything which might remind him of his unhappy boyhood. His mother was always addicted to the excessive use of perfume.

He had need of the open air. He hunted or walked as often as possible. Among those who were permitted to accompany him were the men who had been granted the right to wear a special uniform—a *justaucorps* of blue, with gold and silver braid. In the same way a single invitation to participate in the games of the salon (gambling ran high and large sums were lost and won) held good for always. But everybody who encountered him on his way to or from his carriage might address him, and as he was entering the palace to visit his mistress he was again for a few moments accessible.

Officers of his household tested the bread, the salt, the plates, and cutlery of the king, before supper was served. The food was brought in with great ceremony. The princes and princesses took their places at the command of the king. Soft music played. After supper the royal household assembled in the king's private rooms. He was put to bed in the pres-

ence of the court, and once more there was an opportunity of presenting a demand. Monseigneur the Dauphin usually handed to the king his night-shirt, while the king each night indicated one of the courtiers who might hold the candle as he got into bed. This holding of the candle was a supreme daily honour.

At this time Louis was sad. Two of his sons had just died. The queen-mother had died. Colbert had died. Always had he been religiously inclined: never did he miss mass: never did he miss the Holy Sacraments: if in church anybody made the smallest noise the king was angry. But now the king began to fall into the hands of Père La Chaise and Madame de Maintenon, and the Revocation of the Edict de Nantes, one of the greatest errors of his reign, was being prepared.

Peace for Louis had its victories which were even more useful than those of war. Everybody else had disarmed but Louis kept his troops and in the period of so-called peace which followed the signing of the Treaty of Nimwegen, he seized town after town. These were profitable years—these years from 1679 to 1688. Louvois had completed the organization of the armies, and Vauban had fortified Flanders, Lorraine, and Alsace, so that there was a curtain of iron from the north-east to the south-east of France. Louis's ambition to be emperor, or to make the

Dauphin emperor, revived. The Dauphin was married to a German princess; and the Elector of Brandenburg was bought by Louis, and in a secret treaty declared that the king was more capable than anyone else, by his great and heroic virtues, and by his power, to re-establish the Empire in its ancient splendour, and to defend it against the Turks. Louis had received a number of towns in Alsace and Lorraine "with their dependencies." Since the German princes might be counted upon to help him, and since the emperor was occupied with the Turks, who again had entered Hungary and had menaced Vienna, Louis thought the moment propitious to interpret, in the largest sense, the word "dependencies." For this purpose he adopted a singular procedure. He claimed juridically all the fiefs which once belonged to the lords and bishops of the Duchy of Bar, of Verdunois, and of Alsace, and which were now included in the Empire. At Tournai, Metz, Breisach, and Besançon, Chambers of Reunion were established by the king. The feudal proprietors of the disputed territories were convoked to defend their title. Among them were the King of Spain, the King of Sweden, the Palatine elector. There were, besides, bishops and princes and dukes. They did not appear, and the chambers, invoking titles which went back to the Merinvogian kings, calmly gave to Louis some hundreds of fiefs, including the important towns of Sarrebruck, Deux-

Ponts, Luxembourg, Montbéliard. As for Strasbourg, it was invited to recognize the King of France. Louvois had placed upon the Rhine thirty-eight battalions, eighty-two squadrons, and eighty cannon. The magistrates of the town informed the emperor that they were not strong enough to resist. They therefore capitulated. The king made his solemn entry. He re-established the Catholic cult in the cathedral, and he made of Strasbourg one of the strongest places in Europe.

Germany was alarmed. The seizure of Strasbourg in time of peace was denounced as a felony. Louvois replied by issuing a medal on which was the motto "Clausa Germanis Gallia"—France closed to Germans. Many times had the imperial armies passed the bridgehead here, and it was natural enough, since Alsace belonged to France, that the Republic of Strasbourg, an enclave in French territory, always open to the imperialists, should be taken. But the method was unquestionably high-handed. This was the first time that towns had been won by decrees.

At the same time other French troops occupied Casale in Montferrat following a bargain with the duke, in order to control Northern Italy. Louis was firmly planted on the Rhine and on the Po.

Then came the expedition against Algiers. Barbary pirates had pursued French ships to the Provençal coast. Duquesne, now over seventy years of age,

sailed against them, and chased them into a Turkish port where he destroyed them. Finally he bombarded Algiers, the repair of the pirates. He was enabled to do this by adopting an invention of a young sailor named Bernard Renaud. Renaud had much difficulty in inducing the French authorities to accept his idea of galleys on which were mounted mortars. They were formidable engines of destruction against maritime places; but Duquesne himself was opposed to a system which required the razing of the great constructions in the poop and prow which were then considered indispensable. These constructions made of battleships moving fortresses. "But," said Renaud, "fortresses are good on solid ground, where immobility is required, but are useless on the sea, where rapidity is essential. You think of your vessels as fortresses. That is why your vessels are as heavy as fortresses." The old admiral was struck by this reply. Renaud was allowed to build his galleys and to place mortars upon them. He was allowed to accompany the expedition to Algiers. The town was bombarded. The dey was massacred. But the people of Algiers placed their French prisoners before their cannon and blew them on to the French ships. Duquesne continued his bombardment, and destroyed a large part of the town. Peace was made in 1684, and piracy in the Mediterranean was less frequent.

A similar expedition of a somewhat cowardly character was undertaken against Genoa. The people of Genoa were accused of having aided the Algerians, and of having used "language injurious to the honour of the great King. Many thousand bombs were, on this provocation, thrown upon Genoa, and magnificent palaces were reduced to powder. The doge was informed that if he did not go to Versailles to ask pardon of the king, the French would bombard Genoa a second time. In February 1685, the doge consented to visit Louis as a suppliant. He was to be accompanied by four senators. "When they shall be admitted to audience," says the document which he signed, "the Doge shall declare, in the name of the Republic of Genoa, extreme regret for having displeased His Majesty, and shall employ in his discourse the most submissive expressions, the most respectful, and those which will best mark his sincere desire to merit, in the future, the goodwill of His Majesty, and to preserve it preciously."

In virtue of this article the doge and his suite came to Paris in April. They were kept waiting by the hectoring king for nearly a month. It was at Versailles that Louis eventually received the doge—Versailles which was now practically built, and on whose ceilings Le Brun and Mignard had painted the mythological world in which Louis and his family were

supposed to move; while the grounds had been planted with trees by Le Nôtre, and the statuary of Coysevox, Girardon, and Puget had been erected. Louis did not receive the doge as doge; for as doge he would be entitled to special honours. He received him as the ambassador of Genoa. Louis's throne was placed at the end of the gallery. By his side was the dauphin and the royal princes. The courtiers were lined up. The doge made a most humble speech which Louis was gracious enough to acknowledge.

Afterwards Louis unbent. He invited the doge to be present at his *lever*. He invited him to a ball. He gave him Gobelins tapestries and other gifts. The doge was duly impressed, as were his senators. "How marvellous! What riches!" said one of them to the doge. "What has astonished you most at Versailles?" And the doge replied: "To find myself there."

There were other incidents which ministered to Louis's glory. The king was not afraid of defying the pope, in spite of his religious sentiments. The Gallican clergy drew up four articles on spiritual and temporal authority. Bossuet was their principal author. Louis adopted them and gave them force of law. These articles seriously abased the pretensions of the pope and insisted on the liberty of the Gallican churches. The pope refused investiture to bishops chosen by the king, and when Innocent XI died, there

were thirty French dioceses left without bishops. Again there was an abusive practice at Rome to which Innocent XI wished to put an end. The Catholic ambassadors extended their rights of asylum over a whole quarter of the city. When the pope protested, the kings of Europe agreed to put an end to the practice. But Louis stood out as singular. He was not to follow others; they were to follow him. He sent troops to uphold the privilege. Thereupon the pope excommunicated the French ambassador, and Louis retorted by seizing Avignon.

It was, in fact, this dispute with the pope that was to bring matters to a head. The pope objected to the appointment of Cardinal Furstenberg, Bishop of Strasbourg, to the archbishopric of Cologne; and the pope appointed instead Clement of Bavaria. Louis, as was natural with him, sent troops to support his arguments; and took the opportunity of claiming part of the Palatinate on behalf of Madame, the princess who had married his brother.

It would have been strange if Europe had stood idly by. It was strange that Europe was so long idle. In 1681, the Emperor Leopold and the rulers of Spain, Holland, Sweden, had secretly united to maintain the Nimwegen treaty, but though Louis broke it in "interpreting" it, no move was yet made. Indeed the Diet of Ratisbon, in 1684, declared for a twenty years'

truce. The fortunes of Louis were at their apogee. Yet the discontented nations, in July 1686, formed the League of Augsburg. The following year Sweden adhered to it, and England was to range herself with the League of Augsburg in 1689.

Chapter Seventeen

THE SECRET MARRIAGE

INTO the intimacy of the king stole imperceptibly Françoise d'Aubigné, widow of the burlesque poet, the crippled Scarron, later to be known as Madame de Maintenon. She had long been the governess of Louis's illegitimate children. Still more curious it is that La Montespan should have chosen, for this comparatively humble post, the woman who was to be her successor.

Madame de Maintenon was three years older than the king, who was himself in the forties. Not therefore by youthful charm did she obtain her hold on him. He had always shown a peculiar taste—one remembers the ugly Marie Mancini, the disfigured Louise de La Vallière, the wicked Montespan, who, though voluptuous, was, according to various amusing accounts, absurdly fat. Now Louis chose a widow of lowly descent, of doubtful past, an aging widow who had been the object of charity, and who had performed functions which, though honourable enough, were scarcely noble.

We are told by Madame de Sévigné that his new friend introduced him to the "commerce of amity and of conversation—a novel country for him." She had been a Calvinist and like most converts found it necessary to show her zeal against the Calvinists. She had frequented the most notorious courtesan of the age—the bewitching but immoral Ninon de Lenclos—and she now pretended to a cold virtue. Doubtless she was sincere both in her rigidity and in her bigotry, though it is to be remarked that, precisely by repulsing Louis, did she win him; and in one of her letters she throws a strange light on her religious sentiments. "Ruvigny," she writes, "has told the King that I was born a Calvinist, and remained such until my appearance at Court. That obliges me to approve things which are strongly opposed to my sentiments." She had an air of being at her ease, but she displayed great respectfulness. Her language was well-chosen and polished, she was quick in repartee, and her observations were just. So much did the king rely upon her judgment that he jocularly called her *Votre Solidité*.

To decide whether the widow Scarron was purely a designing woman is beside our purpose. There is evidence that she knew well what she was about, but it is incredible that she could, in the early days of her association with Louis, have hoped to sit, morganatically, on the French throne. The probability is that she persuaded herself of her sincerity, and that she

meant to save the king from Madame de Montespan, without conscious thought of reward. With Père La Chaise, the confessor of the king, she set to work to win him from his sinful ways. His adulterous behaviour was regarded as scandalous by the pious persons of the court. It must not be supposed that, because there was laxity of morals, there was general approval of Louis's conduct. The Protestants and the Jansenists were particularly incensed, but the Catholics, too, realized that a corrupt court must bring religion into discredit. Besides Père La Chaise and Madame de Maintenon, there were Bossuet and the Père Bourdaloue, to deprecate these extra-conjugal diversions of the king.

Bourdaloue, preaching before the court on impurity, was audaciously severe. Impurity, he said, was the ally of all the vices—and he made pointed references to the *affaire des poisons* and the sacrilegious ceremonies of La Voisin. Those who engage in crime must expect to be the victims of crime. Had not Louis himself been menaced? We have seen that the king was accessible to his subjects. By old custom he consented to receive petitions which were presented to him personally. What was easier than to spread poison on one of these petitions and so kill the king? The nefarious practices of the Borgias were evoked. Whether in fact a poisoned petition would kill the king or not, whether these powerful drugs existed or

were figments of imagination, at least there was sufficient, in recent happenings, to frighten the essentially timid Louis. If it is true that generally he did not tolerate aristocratic insolence, an enormous influence was exercised over him. He could defy the pope, but he nevertheless shrank from the reproaches of his spiritual advisers.

From time to time there were veritable conspiracies of a religious character against La Montespan, and Madame de Maintenon, the second mother of his children, was the willing tool of the priests. She was put forward to persuade him, with all the tact of which she was capable, of the need, if he valued his eternal salvation, of two things—separation from La Montespan and the Revocation of the Edict de Nantes.

She was an excellent messenger. Her manners were insinuating, her piety (after her equivocal youth) was impressive. If she secretly worked for herself it is hard to blame her. Her principal object was perhaps to catch the conscience of the king, and not his heart. The task was not as difficult as might have been believed. In the first place, Louis, though he lived to what was regarded as a good age, already found his powers declining. He was no longer the ardent lover, alternately sentimental and violent. He was no longer the boy who sighed in moonlit groves, or the crotted soldier brutally amorous. He was aging prematurely. To sit on horseback was becoming an ordeal. The

arms of La Montespan were not a refuge, but a prison. Other consolations were necessary. In the second place, there was always a religious strain in Louis. We have noted his assiduous attendance at mass, and anecdotes which reveal his almost superstitious regard for the Holy Offices have been related by the memorialists.

As early as 1675 the king showed remorse. He listened to the exhortations of the priests who warned him against La Montespan. La Vallière was permitted to retire to a convent, and the king promised, though he did not keep his promise, to cease his adulterous connection with La Montespan.

But there was a third reason which, perhaps more than the others, operated the reform which was desired by the Catholics. It was the revelation of the *Chambre Ardente*. That there were criminal plots against the king can hardly be doubted. That La Montespan was compromised is obvious. Louis was cast down. He was frightened, physically and morally. His life was endangered, and his glory was endangered. There was in his entourage, in daily contact with him, a woman who was capable of anything. What was worse, this woman was the mother of his children. He could let the law take its course and so be rid of her. But this was a prospect dreadful to contemplate. What would the world say of the resplendent king who was the paramour of a poisoner and a blasphemer? It would laugh at him; it would

refuse to believe in his infallibility, even in his superiority; it would think of Louis as a ridiculous blunderer. His vanity could not support such a blow. The matter was hushed up, and La Montespan was allowed to live at court, but the king's relations with her ended.

His love of pleasure, his self-indulgence, had involved him in unspeakable horrors. In his heart was the fear of the devil. He turned to piety; he turned to Madame de Maintenon.

So it was that the most despised of the rivals of La Montespan gained her ascendancy. She gained it by fear. Throughout the life of Louis, if one looks closely, one will find the mysterious workings of that consciousness of inferiority which was implanted in him as a boy. Sometimes it caused him to manifest an exceptional braggadocio, an exceptional susceptibility, an exceptional dignity, an exceptional ambition, but sometimes, too, it reduced Louis to the most humble posture. Usually there was a woman to whom he was obliged to behave like a child. To women he fled, to women he revealed his secrets. The widow Scarron happened to be in his path, and it chanced that she presented the greatest contrast with La Montespan at the moment when the distracted king was trembling on the brink of the diabolical abyss which he saw opening at his feet. Had she been a scullery maid, she would have succeeded in becoming his mentor. Had she been altogether devoid of beauty

and wit, Louis would nevertheless have laid his head on her bosom.

Let us briefly trace her history. She was born in 1635 of a father who had been imprisoned for robbery, coining, and assassination. Her mother was the jailer's daughter, and she was born in the prison. She was then taken to Martinique. Because of the Martinique days she was called "La Belle Indienne." After some miserable years she was back in France, where she acted as a servant to Madame de Neuillant, a relative. Such were her humble origins, and when it was proposed that she should marry Scarron, she jumped at the chance of securing comparative independence. She could count herself fortunate that she, a girl of seventeen, without dot, without prospects of any kind, should have a husband.

But what a husband! He had lived a life of debauch, and was now a bitter-tongued invalid. She had beauty and brains; and Scarron made unscrupulous use of them. The company that he kept did not offer a good example to the girl who was suddenly thrown in their midst. Without experience of the world, with an ailing, prematurely old husband, she mingled with penniless scribblers and adventurous aristocrats who were not likely to respect the wife of the cynical poet. That her reputation did not suffer permanently is surprising. Many of her companions were women of the easiest virtue. Ninon de Lenclos

more than hints at the "adaptability" of Madame Scarron to her environment—though, regarding her with an expert eye, Ninon found her *trop gauche pour l'amour*. One has difficulty in believing that she and Ninon could sleep in the same bed without contamination. Yet we must in fairness record Ninon's testimony, that, even in those days, Madame Scarron was religious and frigid. In any case we may be sure that if she sinned, it was without conviction; if she had lovers, it was without love.

When she was left a widow in 1660 she entered a convent. She lived on charity. Finally she was granted a pension, and she installed herself more fashionably. But, according to Saint-Simon, she was for her elegant visitors a sort of superior domestic. She was ready to do their bidding, to perform small and menial services. This was her method of ingratiating herself. Among her friends was the Marquise de Montespan.

It was natural that the marquise should think of her poor protégée when a governess was wanted for her children. These children were to be brought up royally, but they were to be concealed. Clearly, the post was one which, despite the whispered calumnies concerning her past, was fitting for the lowly-born widow in poor circumstances, who was, as it were, on the edge of the fashionable world. But her piety, real or affected, made her pause. Should she connive at

the adultery of La Montespan and the king? Would she not be playing a disgraceful part? On the other hand, could she not bring up the children of the king in the true faith? She consulted her confessor who advised her to accept the offer. Perhaps she remembered an old prediction of a mason who had a reputation as prophet: "Madame," said he, "one day you will be Queen." Perhaps she remembered a phrase that she had written many years ago to a friend after watching the entry into Paris of Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse: "I do not believe that anybody could have imagined anything so beautiful." As governess of the royal children she was given a house in the Marais and her pension was increased. Then the children were brought from their hiding-places. Their education was supervised by Madame Scarron. There were discussions on many matters between her and La Montespan. She sometimes threatened to resign her post, but she was too useful to be allowed to go. One can well believe that her relations with La Montespan were difficult. The voluptuous mistress and the pious governess disliked each other, but they were irrevocably bound together.

The future queen has painted a picture of herself in the days before the infants were recognized, going on foot in disguise from nurse to nurse, and carrying parcels of clothes and food. Sometimes she would have to pass the night in a child's sick-room, in a little

house outside Paris, and she would return in the morning weary, entering her own abode by the back door, hastily changing her clothes, and leaving by the front door to mount in her carriage and to make her tour of the fashionable world. For it would never do to let it be suspected that she had an unavowable occupation. The more she had to work, the more she had to show herself in public. When the secret was out, and the children were brought together, and she had nothing to hide, then she preferred solitude.

One imagines the scenes which the exuberant Madame de Montespan constantly created. There was, between these two women, a bitter struggle, though they pretended to be on friendly terms. The governess complained to the king, and Louis tried to settle their quarrels. One day the governess and La Montespan were wrangling when Louis entered unexpectedly and asked what was the matter. It was the governess who recovered her composure first, and she calmly proposed to the king that he should go into another room with her to receive her explanations. La Montespan, infuriated, was left alone. Madame de Maintenon did not hesitate to expose all her grievances. She denounced the violence, the harshness of Madame de Montespan. That Louis should listen to these tales, told by the governess of his publicly accepted mistress, unquestionably denotes the feebleness of his own character. That Madame de

Maintenon should have ventured on such a course unquestionably shows that she had a clear appreciation of the feebleness of Louis's character. With women, as usual, he was helpless. He could be bullied, he could be cajoled, and he could not protest.

With opportunities of coming into daily contact with the king, united to him by the bond of his children, the widow Scarron succeeded in impressing the impressionable Louis. At first he was a little afraid of her. She was too difficult, too pedantic, too reproachful, but presently he began to admire her good sense. He found her company entertaining. However placid was the temperament of the governess, it must not be forgotten that she had been brought up in the witty and elegant school of Ninon de Lenclos. Some superannuated grace remained. Moreover, she was apparently disinterested. She did not beg for favours as did the others. Louis, as a gallant man, tried to make love to her: that was his duty. But she gently preached sermons to him. Already the conduct of the king was discreditable—he must not complicate his adultery.

Louis's liking for her was never really passionate. It was because it was not passionate that it was profound and enduring. There was no surer way of obtaining the friendship of the satiated king than to keep their relationship as far as possible on a Platonic footing. So he began to frequent more and more the

society of this pious sensible woman. How different she was from the ebullient Montespan! When the King was tired—and he was often tired—it was not a noisy, restless, mercenary, brilliant woman that he wanted: it was a calm, quiet person who could console him without amorous intentions, who could receive his confidences—even though those confidences concerned La Montespan. La Montespan displayed bad temper: La Maintenon never. With one the embers of a dying fire were angrily stirred to flame: with the other there was a sweet equal light. Thus La Maintenon dissipated boredom but did not demand mental or physical exertion. Thus with her Louis took refuge from the stormy Montespan. She was, too, his religious mentor, and where a Bossuet or a Fénelon would have failed she succeeded.

All this, given the character of Louis, which we have endeavoured to fix, is perfectly explicable. Everything happened in the most natural manner. The rude shock of the poison revelations completed the discomfiture of La Montespan, but even now that the favourite was in disgrace Madame de Maintenon asked nothing for herself. On the contrary, she, by her own influence, and by the religious reaction which had been operated, partly by her agency, in the king, reconciled him with Marie-Thérèse. The queen was soon to die, but her last days were rendered happy by the change in the king. Louis was attentive for the

first time to his wife. She, poor woman, naïvely informed the whole court. The governess looked benevolently on. Probably she took a genuine pleasure in her good work. Probably she had no selfish designs. Her reward was the approbation of her own conscience.

Yet by now her situation had indeed changed. She was no longer the widow Scarron. Louis had been irritated at the name. It was undignified that his intimate friend, the guardian of his children, should constantly recall her association with a disreputable poet. She took therefore the name of Madame de Surgères. But this name was equally bad. It was —the pun is inevitable—"suggestive." Madame de Montmorency deliberately pronounced it badly. Madame Scarron was a prude, and therefore it was a good joke to call her Madame Suggère. Ninon caught up the pleasantry. "My faith, it is a capital name for her. Madame de la Sablière *suggested* that she should marry the *cul-de-jatte* Scarron. The Maréchal d'Albret, the Duc de Richelieu, the Villareaux *suggested* that she should make him *cocu*. The Abbé Gobelin *suggested* that she should become a prude. It was *suggested* to a mason that he should *suggest* to her the idea of becoming Queen. Ambition and ingratitude have *suggested* to her that she should ruin her benefactress who saved her from misery and confided the King's infants to her."

"Yes," added Madame de Montmorency, "and it is the bad angel of Madame de Montespan who *suggested* to the King that he should heap favours on the widow Scarron."

Then it was that the king enabled her to come into possession of the Maintenon estates, and made her a marquise. Even this name of Madame de Maintenon was distorted maliciously. Ninon called her Madame de Maintenant—which implied that she was now the favourite of the king and was making hay while the Roi-Soleil shone. But she could not change her name every day, and so Madame de Maintenon she remained.

The courtiers were ready to range themselves on the side of the new favourite. Louvois at once transferred his attentions to Madame de Maintenon. He professed strong religious feelings. He was ready to become a hunter of Huguenots. That was a sure way to please her. Her bigotry was developing daily, and she was trying to induce the king to take severe measures against those who professed the reformed faith. The rights of the Protestants were being filched away. Pressure was put upon them to be converted. Louis's religious reawakening was to have terrible results which we will deal with later. Here we will only say that his religious reawakening marched side by side with his kingly intolerance of division in the realm. *Un Roi, Une Foi, Une Loi*—One King, One Faith,

One Law. If he had the right religion, then others must have the right religion. If others pretended that they had the right religion, then they insulted Louis by assuming that he had the wrong religion. Further, he desired order, and order for him was uniformity. Then began the dragonnades. Louvois saw to it that his soldiers were quartered in Protestant homes. There they could behave as they pleased. No inquiries into their conduct would be made.

The Père La Chaise, who was the ally of Madame de Maintenon, was the nephew of Père Cotton, the confessor of Henri IV. He was a Jesuit of good intentions and considerable capacity. In 1675 he was called to Paris to be the confessor of the king. There were obvious advantages in the Catholic custom of placing a Jesuit close to the king. The Jesuits were generally much better educated than the members of other orders, and moreover they swore to accept no episcopal functions. Their independence was important. They were not tempted to seek personal profits. Saint-Simon describes Père La Chaise as of mediocre intelligence, but of good character; just, upright, moderate, possessing common sense, an enemy of tale-telling and of violence. He was modest and respectful, affable and honest. His manners were austere and he was not self-seeking.

In the year 1685, came the Revocation of the Edict

of Nantes. Almost simultaneously Madame de Maintenon was married to the king.

When Louis was left a widower there was much speculation as to whom he should marry. The marriage of a king, and especially a king like Louis, might have the greatest diplomatic consequences. We have seen how the marriage of Marie-Thérèse helped to change the history of France. We shall see that the Treaty of the Pyrenees was to bear still more extraordinary results. Therefore, it was a matter of deep concern to Europe that a suitable princess should be discovered. Louis could choose where he pleased. A judicious choice might bring peace to Europe. It might bring fresh territory to France. There was certainly a scarcity of suitable princesses, but it was with consternation that the diplomatists heard whispers of the possibility of Louis's marriage with a plebeian person, the widow of a poet, a governess of children. She had been elevated, it is true. She had shown herself a zealous Catholic. But while these things might make her an admirable mistress, it was unheard of that they should suffice to make her queen. Madame de Maintenon, however, was not inclined to be merely a mistress of the king. With her decaying charms the liaison might not last. Certainly Louis was no longer exigent. If he was relatively young, he was physically burnt out. Why should she not become his wife? The double character of Louis is

again shown in his marriage. On the one hand, he would defy the world. On the other hand, the resplendent king would satisfy his own lowly tastes. The boy who had played at being a valet, whose intimate companion had been La Porte, would not shrink from honouring a governess—if, indeed, the governess did not honour him. What did it serve to be the mightiest monarch of Europe if he could not indulge his private caprices? Beneath the armour of grandeur was an undying humility; and both grandeur and humility were gratified by his marriage with Madame de Maintenon. His humility impelled him to show his superiority to the judgment of the court. His grandeur enabled him to look where he liked for a helpmate against a hostile world.

Père La Chaise favoured the marriage, but he counselled secrecy. Here was the proper compromise. Here was the solution of all difficulties.

Madame de Maintenon told the king that she contemplated retiring to a convent and passing the rest of her life in prayers for the salvation of the king. This was more than Louis could bear. He could not lose his wise friend, whose serenity and whose advice were everything to him. The Duc du Maine, for whom Madame de Maintenon had been a veritable mother, implored the king not to part with her. Bossuet, consulted by the king, was not unfavourable to a marriage. But the news leaked out. There were

protests from all sides. It was incredible that Louis should wed a woman fifty years of age with nothing to commend her. Monseigneur the Dauphin, indolent and apathetic, suddenly became energetic. He hastened from Meudon to Versailles, and denounced with vigour the strange fancy of his father. He spoke not only as son but as heir to the crown. Louis was shaken. He promised to consult others. Fénelon pronounced against the marriage, and lost the archbishopric of Paris. Louvois, who had made use of Madame de Maintenon, was shocked, and against his own interests besought the king not to take an irreparable step.

Louis was perplexed. He tried to make a bargain with Monseigneur. If Monseigneur would renounce his opposition, then Monseigneur's illegitimate daughter should be legitimatized. With indignation the dauphin refused.

Was there an implied contract between the king and his spiritual advisers? Did they agree to the marriage on condition that he revoked the Edict of Nantes? It is so suggested, and there is reason to believe there is some connection between the two events, which almost synchronized.

At any rate, Louis resolved to follow his own inclinations, to marry without discussing the matter further with the members of his family, and if possible to keep it secret. So there were assembled on a dark

winter night in a room in the Palais de Versailles, a few persons, including a curé and a valet, before an altar that had been erected for the occasion. The little group awaited the king, who entered limping and ailing. leading Madame de Maintenon by the hand. The couple knelt before the altar, there was a short simple ceremony; and when the king and Madame de Maintenon left the room they were man and wife.

This was the beginning of quarrels among the members of Louis's family. Monseigneur, for example, rarely afterwards visited Versailles. The king held his receptions in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, and endeavoured to induce his son to attend them. But Monseigneur was adamant. Once the king took his arm after mass, and led him to the very door of the apartments. There the dauphin wrenched himself free, made his salute, and walked away without speaking a word. Between the court of Versailles and the court of Meudon there was a protracted duel. From the Meudon court issued the most libellous pamphlets. The king was sad and sick, and a gloom began to settle over him.

Chapter Eighteen

THE FATAL REVOCATION

IT IS generally agreed that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was the worst fault that Louis committed. France suffered in that she lost hundreds of thousands of her best citizens, who emigrated, in spite of efforts to prevent them; and in that she turned against her Protestant Europe at a time when she was already in antagonism with Catholic Europe. The workers in the industries developed by Colbert were Huguenots who, badly treated by France, carried their skill and knowledge to Germany, to England, and to other countries, and were foremost in the ranks of the enemy which discomfited France. No profit whatever could come to the king or to his country or to the Catholic Church from this persecution. That Louis was penitent for his adultery, that he wished to obtain forgiveness for his misdeeds by showing religious zeal, was one reason for the Revocation. Another was his conception of French unity—as if unity can be obtained by coercion. Though it is impossible to remove responsibility from Louis, it is fair to say that he was

manœuvred by his entourage, that the bigots and fanatics who surrounded him, taking advantage of his weakness, made him their dupe and forced him to do this dreadful thing.

In the sky is only one sun. In the state there should only be one master. Louis regarded himself as the representative of God on earth. He adopted the old formula of the Ligue—"*Une seule nation, une seule religion.*" His beliefs must be the beliefs of all Frenchmen. The Protestants were not now a danger to the state. Since the days of Richelieu they had ceased to be a political party. They practised their cult in peace. They had no rebellious designs. Even during the troubles of the Fronde they remained perfectly quiet. Louis himself had publicly recognized their fidelity. The Edict of Nantes had been confirmed in 1652 by the Edict of Saint-Germain. In the army, in the navy, in the magistracy, in finances, the Protestants were among the most conspicuous servants of the king. There were Protestants who were converted, notably the Condés and Turenne. But there were others, such as Schomberg, and the great seaman Duquesne, who remained Protestants. The leaders of industry were Protestants. They asked nothing but the right to keep their creed.

In his Memoirs, Louis says that early in his reign he formed his plan of action against the Protestants. We are entitled to doubt whether it was as concrete

a plan as he afterwards represented it to be. For what it is worth, his statement reveals an ungenerous attitude. He did not, he declares, intend to impose new hardships upon this section of his subjects. He did not intend to destroy their liberties as already defined. But those liberties were to be narrowly interpreted, and such privileges as depended upon the king were not to be granted. Thus the Protestants would be induced to ask themselves whether they were wise in voluntarily depriving themselves of special advantages they might enjoy by the simple process of conversion. When he was a young man he was hurt by the austerity of the Protestants, and annoyed by the gravity of the Jansenists. The dissident Catholics of Port-Royal, solitary and sincere, the rigid pastors of Languedoc, with their otherworldliness, were a perpetual silent reproach to the frivolous court. They frowned on the spectacle of king and courtiers dancing with light ladies on the lawns of Versailles to the sound of violins. Unpleasant as their implied rebukes might be, their conduct was exemplary. But the orthodox Catholics were increasingly active and implacable. They undertook a campaign against the Protestants. They demanded that free-thinking, which was contrary to the interests of the church, should at least be circumscribed. The Protestants suffered vexation after vexation. In the South the struggle with the church had gone on for many generations. The

Albigenses in the thirteenth century were the forerunners of the Protestants; and sometimes one side was victorious, and sometimes the other, and atrocities were committed by both. Now, in the middle of the seventeenth century, there were irksome penalties for Protestantism. Various trades were closed to Huguenots. They could not practise as lawyers, book-sellers, printers, doctors. From other professions they were, as far as possible, excluded.

The rigours of the church increased. It was ordained that Protestant children could be converted at the most tender age, and it was sufficient for a child to manifest the slightest interest in Catholicism for him to be torn from his family. Protestant midwives were not tolerated on the ground that they would prefer to sacrifice the child to save the mother, and so send an unbaptized creature to certain damnation. A Protestant had no status. His marriage was illegal unless performed according to the rites of the Catholic Church. His property was confiscated on any pretext, and inducements were held out to common informers who might have half the estates of persons convicted by their aid. There were many executions, especially of the pastors; and steps were taken to prevent their preaching from the scaffold, for as they ascended to the fatal platform the drums were loudly beaten. Unspeakable tortures were inflicted. Public worship was prohibited, and recalcitrants were sent to the terrible

galleys. Bribes were offered to obtain conversions, but the Huguenots declined to surrender their creed for profit; and resisted rewards as they resisted punishments. Nothing could shake the faith of the sincere Huguenots. They were ready to suffer martyrdom. Emigration, bitter as it was, seemed to offer a way of escape; and although the frontiers were firmly closed to Protestants, they went sadly into exile. What is truly disturbing is that some of the men and women we admire most—Racine, La Bruyère, La Fontaine, Madame de Sévigné—approved of these measures. Assuredly they did not understand them. Louis himself was undoubtedly kept in ignorance of the worst effects of turning loose the Catholic fanatics on his most God-abiding, harmless, and useful subjects. Saint-Simon is clear-sighted. He denounces the detestable means adopted to secure conversions as throwing durable and irremediable odium on true religion. It was certain that the conversions which were obtained could not be genuine. Those who succumbed to promises or to threats were simply subordinating, for a time, their conscience to their physical security and their material prosperity. To what purpose compel people to pretend to adore what they do not adore? How could these simulated adjurations serve Louis, France, or the church? As for those who fled, they aroused the pity of Europe. The sight of these poor people, proscribed, penniless, in rags, moved Holland,

England, Germany, against France; and the ambassadors expressed their alarm. Louis was working for the King of Prussia, for Prussia, subsequently the most formidable of France's foes, became prosperous only when these transplanted multitudes introduced their industries into the country.

It was officially set forth that a return to Catholicism meant the re-establishment of the state in its full splendour, opulence, and force. The royal decree completely interdicted the exercise of the reformed religion, and ordered the demolition of temples, and gave to the Protestant ministers fifteen days to leave the country.

At the same time the persecution of the Jansenists was pursued on a smaller scale. Their doctrine of divine grace was rank heresy, and the purity of their lives was a standing insult. Blaise Pascal had written his famous *Lettres Provinciales*, in which he unsparingly denounced the Jesuits. But the Jesuits won: they obtained a papal bull against the Jansenists; and finally the king ordered the demolition of Port-Royal, so that no stone was left on stone, and bodies of the buried heretics were flung to the four winds. The plough churned up the earth; a desert was created; but to that desert still go many pious pilgrims.

The most ingenious and wicked device of the anti-Huguenots is remembered as the dragonnades. The dragonnades were the turning of Protestant homes into

barracks. This quartering of the soldiers in Huguenot houses was a diabolical piece of work for which the shame must fall upon Louvois. Imagine a peaceful family, sober, pious, suddenly invaded by brutal dragoons! These dragoons were given permission to behave as they pleased. They were the masters. Even had they been merely roughly jocular, the hardship would have been real. They drank and smoked and sang their obscene songs before the women of the household. They delighted in noise. They flung the contents of the wardrobes into the courtyards, and gave the fine linen sheets to horses in the stables. Sometimes the women were blamed for the obstinacy of the husbands, and they were therefore carried off to convents. The children were terrorized and stolen from their parents. Soldiers beat and burned their victims, threw ice-cold water upon them, and, it is creditably recorded, even blew them up with bellows. Rape was nominally forbidden, but since there was no justice for Protestants, rape was inevitable. The officers urged on their men and laughed at the most indescribable excesses. Under the eyes of a mother or a wife, a daughter or a husband was treated with unutterable severity. It was found to be an excellent method of securing a convert to tie a nursing mother at some distance from her hungry baby. At Montauban thirty-eight dragoons took possession of a single house and turned out a woman who was preg-

nant, and had four children of whom the eldest was seven. Often persons were ejected in a state of nakedness.

In the Cévennes the Abbé du Chayla introduced the tortures which he had himself seen and suffered in Indo-China. There is no more perplexing theme than that of religious intolerance, for the Abbé du Chayla, who inflicted martyrdom on others, had himself been a martyr. He had been persecuted, and he persecuted. He had shown extraordinary courage and constancy, but he was not touched by the exhibition of courage and constancy. The abbé had been a missionary, entering Indo-China well knowing that he might be put to death. He was given the choice of denying Christ or of being delivered over to torture. His choice was quickly made: he had a single eye to the service of God. Accordingly, he was tortured in every limb, and left for dead. His body was hung by the wrists to a tree, as an example of the justice of the Eastern king. At night he was cut down by an outcast, and nursed back to life. This was the man who became an inspector of missions in the Cévennes. As he had been insensible to bodily pain inflicted on himself, so he was insensible to bodily pain inflicted on others.

The hospitals, the prisons, and the galleys, to which Huguenots were sent, were, in their different ways, almost equally frightful. In the hospitals sick and well slept together, five or six of them, in the same

bed. There was no question of isolating those suffering from contagious maladies. There were no sanitary conveniences: at Versailles itself they were lacking, and the hospitals were reeking dens of infection. The filth of the time can hardly be realized and in this filthiness disease was quickly propagated. Fever of any kind was immediately designated plague; and, in the prevalent conditions, actually became plague. No rational effort was made to treat the patients, huddled into rooms soiled by unmentionable things. There was no distinction drawn between a woman with a child and a woman with smallpox; and such operations as were performed were usually performed in the common room. No wonder that the poor regarded with terror the hospitals, and that an abhorrence of hospitals has been transmitted, by the communal memory, to the consciousness of the poor of our day. When the prisons were full, perfectly healthy Protestants were flung into these vile institutions, and thus placed under sentence of death.

The prisons, foul and fever-stricken, damp and infested by rats and vermin, stank of putrefaction. They were sometimes under the earth, dark, wet dungeons; and those which were above the soil were scarcely better, since they were open to the rain and wind. Into them the prisoners, eaten by vermin, charged with chains, chains around their ankles and chains round their necks, as though they were danger-

ous dogs, were thrown pell-mell—and from these hells they were marched in procession, in long chains, to the sea. They died on the way in large numbers. The galleys were long and flat, the benches of the rowers barely three feet above the water. Night and day the captives remained chained to their benches, five of them on the same oar, which was sixty feet long. They were naked to the waist, and on their bleeding backs perpetually fell the hideous whip and the bludgeon of their tormentors. To be chained to the same place, to sleep, to eat, to row, to be beaten, in the same place, under the rain and under the sun, in the same place—what fate more unbearable!

Some of the Catholic women, moved by their zeal or by their veritable goodness, asked that they might become jailers. Until that time prisoners had been guarded by men. It was excellent in principle that the houses of *grandes dames* should be used as more comfortable prisons. But, in practice, in these houses, which were uncontrolled by the authorities, the priests were supreme masters, and they gave way to strange fury. The convents in which were placed married women who had been separated from their husbands were somewhat better, but here too the devotees ran into excesses. The Maisons des Filles Repenties were abominably managed. Children five years of age were brought up by the nuns and priests in heartbreaking conditions. Nothing is more striking than the obsti-

nacy of the children, who clung to their religion despite cajolery and punishment. They seemed to cultivate a positive desire for suffering—a morbid desire which grew as the persecutions became more and more general. Presently there were established Catholic homes for young girls with money, and others who could work with their needle. For mercenary motives soon mingled with religious enthusiasm. In the convent of which Fénelon was director, gentler methods were practised. He was a man of rare refinement, exceptional dignity, prudent courage. He saw that it was impossible to substitute one dogma for another in the minds of these young Huguenots, but he could melt all dogmas in religious tenderness. This was surely the most promising way. Quietism flourished: Madame Guyon had preached the pure love of God, obedience, renunciation, abandonment to God. Yet while these young girls were thus given consolation, the ladies of Versailles paid visits, related the news of the court, made of the convents fashionable rendezvous. Even Saint-Cyr, founded by Madame de Maintenon for girls, was an annex of the court.

From all these dangers there was the possibility of flight. Yet flight was difficult. Anyone who was detected and caught could hope for no mercy and the denunciator had half his goods. Generally families separated to fly in different directions. That gave

them an additional chance. Often they did not meet again. Of all ages, these fugitives started on their hazardous journey over mountains, through forests, across desert land, over the seas. Girls disfigured and disguised themselves. In the winter snows they marched for many miles across difficult country. They hid in ships. There were cases of the stowaways who remained among barrels in the hold, or buried in heaps of coal, for a fortnight before the ship set sail. Fishermen were besought to give them passage. In one little boat forty persons were surprised by a storm, and lived without food, on the angry seas, in peril of shipwreck, for many days before the white cliffs of England at last appeared. Occasionally the emigrants were captured by the Barbary pirates and sold as slaves. There were others who were robbed of their poor belongings by their supposed rescuers and flung into the sea. The policy as regards emigration fluctuated. Generally flight was sternly prohibited, but sometimes the prisons were emptied and women and old men put on ships and sent, penniless and without protection, to the undeveloped colonies.

Geneva was splendid. It was a little town of fifteen thousand inhabitants, but it received, lodged, and nourished four thousand fugitives. Michelet remarks that the citizens of Geneva had an instinctive dislike of foreigners. Yet their frigidity now disappeared. They were charitable as few towns have been

charitable. Precise, prudish, pedantic, jealous of their privacy, they nevertheless put up beds in every room, clothed the exiles, deprived themselves of food to feed their guests, ran into debt. When Louis learned that his subjects were at Geneva he ordered the little town to expel them. The little town could not but obey; but Huguenots were expelled by one gate and readmitted by another. Newcomers were sent to Berne.

Northern Germany was hospitable. It helped to form colonies of fugitives and allowed them to set up their own tribunals. England was likewise magnificent in hospitality. Holland, however, must be given the palm. There was the true haven of refuge. Establishments were erected for the refugees, and the French themselves were allowed to direct them. In Amsterdam a thousand new houses were built. Unexampled kindness was shown.

This hospitality of Europe to the French Huguenots is a significant commentary on the folly of Louis and his advisers. Afterwards, when war came, the Huguenot survivors were in the forefront of the Allied armies, and France paid dearly for her persecution of inoffensive folk.

The massacres in the region of Vaud were perhaps the worst. While Bossuet was praising the king for exterminating the heretics, and at the same time pretending that there was no persecution and that

Protestants emigrated because of their perverse imagination, the massacres of Vaud were beginning. In a corner of the Alps a simple primitive religion was practised. It was neither Catholic nor Calvinist. It was not interested in theological controversy. It had something of the original spirit of Christianity. Upon the Vaudois the dragoons were quartered. Louis demanded that the Duc de Savoie should occupy Vaud and convert its inhabitants, and he offered troops for this purpose. The duke could not refuse. The Vaudois sent vain petitions to Turin. The German princes counselled them to leave their country. But how could they carry their families over the Alps in January? Europe was still afraid of Louis, who was menacing everybody, who was enjoying his apotheosis —who was being presented as a god at Versailles by Le Brun, and whose statue of bronze, in the Place des Victoires at Paris, was being worshipped as an idol. Louvois sent four thousand men, and the Duc de Savoie another four thousand, against the two thousand peasants of Vaud. The soldiers burnt and killed. They buried their victims alive; they dashed infants over precipices for sport. There was no atrocity of which they were not guilty.

Elsewhere the "conversions" proceeded amid rejoicing. Processions of "converts" were forced to march between the soldiers. But the Protestants assembled secretly in the mountains, listened to sermons,

and sang their hymns. In the Cévennes was their stronghold, but elsewhere, in the Northern provinces, in Champagne, for example, the soldiers heard strange melodies at midnight. If the temples had been destroyed, there was still the temple of the open air. The sky was still overhead, and under the sky gathered these persecuted folk.

Louis was sick. Tumours were breaking out on his body. He was sad—sad at the moment of his apotheosis. He became still more violent. Europe was beginning to stir against him, and he was troubled by this miserable affair of the Revocation. The worst of it was that money flowed out of France precisely when money was needed. The emigrants had undergone many hardships; many who had been rich became poor; yet, on the whole, they had, in parting, drained France of riches. This idea of compelling everybody to accept the faith of the king was turning out badly. Why, even the "converts," when they were dying, retracted. Their conversion turned out to be not sincere. This was particularly exasperating. The horrified confessors sent for the judge, who informed the dying man or woman that, if he or she died a Protestant, the helpless corpse would be drawn naked on a harrow. Such was the last indignity. One ingenious persecutor exhibited a dead woman at so much a head—the corpse of a damned heretic! Children amused themselves with these naked bodies left un-

buried. Sometimes even bodies were disinterred and drawn on a harrow.

In the South the persecutions provoked an outbreak of mysticism. Men and women and children fell into convulsions, into ecstasy. They preached and they prophesied. In the Cévennes they did not hide themselves. They called upon the soldiers to repent. They were not afraid of death. They were not afraid of torture. They heard mysterious voices. They were accorded heavenly revelations. It was in vain that the Abbé du Chayla and Basville endeavoured to suppress the babes and sucklings out of whose mouths proceeded wisdom. During the winter the assemblies in the desert multiplied. Often when they had their oppressors at their mercy they spared them. Three thousand persons coming from one of these assemblies, in a long file on the mountainside, found a captain with his troops in their path. The captain fired upon them, but they greatly outnumbered him, and his soldiers took refuge in a house. The Protestants, exalted, instead of setting fire to the house, knelt around it and sang their hymns. Sometimes, indeed, they tried to defend themselves, but were slaughtered by hundreds. Usually they were without arms. Thus there was an assembly on Palm Sunday in a valley near Castres. The worshippers read the sacred word, listened to exhortations, sang their hymns. There passed across the sky a shooting star, and in it they

saw a miraculous sign of grace. Suddenly there was an apparition of a girl in white whom nobody knew. While she was preaching the soldiers came upon the scene. "We cannot die at a better moment than now," they said; and they continued to sing their hymns. Their adversaries arrived, the curé at their head, and attacked the crowd; and women as well as men were killed in cold blood.

What degree of blame should be attributed to Louis? Certainly the worst was concealed from him. Certainly he was blinded by his so-called religious sentiments, which were, for the most part, made up of secret and superstitious fears and a desire to purchase his salvation. Truly religious Louis was not, but even when he fought the pope he had a strange regard for the outward ceremonies of religion. Moreover, he was sick with morbid fancies. He had passed his zenith and was in decline. Surrounded by falsely devout persons, in whom there was a blending of gallantry and piety, it would have required strength of character to resist them. It only required weakness to surrender. We must note particularly the masterfulness of Louvois, who, since the death of Colbert, had controlled everything. Louis had pretended to reign without ministers, and for a time perhaps actually possessed personal power. But in these years his energy had vanished. He could still show violence, but not force. He had fallen to this, the great Sun-

King, that he was afraid of Louvois. Madame de Maintenon and Louvois were no longer allies. Louvois, who cared nothing about religion, had invented the dragonnades to appear well in the eyes of the devout party, but he had lost some credit by opposing the marriage of the king and he was now opposed to the public declaration of the marriage. The king dared not announce his marriage while Louvois lived. More, when Louvois died a few years later, in a fit of apoplexy, his shadow haunted the king. Louis hated him as he hated all masters, but he felt unable to act without him. He could, in his anger, rush upon his minister like a naughty child, the fire-tongs uplifted in his hand; but he could not dismiss him. That was why, though Louvois committed obvious blunders of which the worst was to allow William of Orange to sail to England and drive out James II,—an event that might easily have been stopped by sending armies into Holland instead of on the Rhine,—Louis did not dismiss him. That is why, when Louvois was right,—as he was in endeavouring to prevent a French expedition in favour of James,—Louis, who wished to act, did not dismiss him. Louvois held all the threads on which danced the marionettes of the court. The whole court was against him. His red face grew redder. He was perpetually angry. He was insolent. He was redoubtable. Nobody ventured to stand up to him. He was in disgrace, but he was in command.

In defence of Louis it should be stated that the suppression of heresy was demanded by public opinion in France. This does not mean that the Catholics as a whole called for the most rigorous measures; but they considered it was the duty of a Catholic king to insist on observance of the Catholic religion. It was not only the clergy, but the parliaments and the universities, the municipalities, the corporations, which joined in chorus. It was unfortunate that military men and priests were given the task of converting the Protestants. Neither priest nor soldier is a good missionary; and of the two the priest is the worst. The Cardinal de Beausset, in his Life of Bossuet, expresses the utmost regret at the causes of the emigration, but he endeavours to excuse the Revocation by the political system which was then common to all European governments. Protestant states, like Catholic states, had exclusive and prohibitive laws. Everywhere there was religious prejudice. Everywhere there were attempts to secure uniformity of religious practice. James II lost his kingdom because he was a Catholic. William won his kingdom because he was a Protestant. Where the Protestant religion had struck deep root, Catholics were not allowed to participate in public offices, and the public practice of their religion was forbidden. In Denmark, in Sweden, in the Swiss cantons, in some of the Germanic states,

there were laws against the Catholics; just as in France there were laws against the Protestants.

This is, of course, begging the question. The system of Louvois and of Louis (however much or little Louis may have known of the conduct of his emissaries) was not merely a political system. It was a system of terrorism. It may be possible to show other codes in other countries as bad as that of France. But it is not possible to show, in that age, methods of oppression that are comparable with those of France.

Chapter Nineteen

EUROPE AGAINST THE KING

NEARLY ten years of war followed the Revocation. The Protestant countries of Europe were alarmed, and at the same time the Catholic countries were provoked, by Louis. The League of Augsburg included German princes and to it adhered the emperor, the King of Spain, the Duc de Savoie, and the pope himself. Sweden and Holland were, of course, prominent members. The Turks and the English were almost the only powers left out of the league. England soon came in, and this is the manner of it.

Charles II, King of England, died at the beginning of 1685; and the Duke of York succeeded him under the name of James II. He was a zealous Catholic, though England was a Protestant country. His design was to abolish Protestantism and establish Catholicism. Henri IV discovered that Paris was worth a mass; but James II thought that a mass was worth more than three kingdoms. Across the water was Holland, where William, who had married Mary, a daughter of James, was stadholder. William was the

chief of the Protestant movement. William helped the exiles, and the English people, shocked by the popery of their king, looked for help across the water to William.

Yet the Revolution in England was unexpected. The English Church had counselled obedience. Nobody wished to create trouble. The English were indignant but inactive. James foolishly proceeded to defy Parliament and to create Catholic bishops. At last seven English peers called upon William to deliver England from a Catholic king. William hesitated. Naturally prudent, he was by no means sure that a handful of peers could represent British opinion. Before he dethroned his father-in-law, he should be certain of the wishes of the people. Besides, he had no right to compromise Holland. Further, he was well aware that Louis could prevent his crossing to England by the simple process of sending troops into Holland to occupy the attention of the Dutch and their stadholder. For that matter, Louis's sea forces could render a good account of themselves, and easily jeopardize William's adventure for a throne.

Moreover, Louis had every reason to prevent the union of England and Holland. Holland was his enemy. England was his potential enemy; but while James was king, Louis had nothing to fear. With William as king, England would become a dreadful foe. If James were to lose England, so would Louis.

But Louis and his advisers were incredibly foolish. Louis had done everything possible to discourage the French party in Holland. The Netherlands might have been retained, as the allies of France, opposed to Spain; had not Louis made war on them and delivered the De Witts to the anti-French party. During the miseries of the Revocation, Dutch residents in France of Protestant faith, who had been invited by Colbert to aid French industries, were treated precisely like French Huguenots. They too were the victims of the dragonnades. The protestation of Holland was unavailing. The Dutch who had been naturalized were not allowed to depart. In Holland itself there were French police who reported on the emigrants. Louis even called on Holland to deliver up the French fugitives.

It must, however, be recorded that James himself, menaced by William, proudly intimated that he did not require military assistance from Louis. Obviously he would have thus openly become the protégé of Louis. Nevertheless, the French ambassador at the Hague warned Louis that he would do well to act by marching towards Maestricht. It was Louvois who diverted the attention of the king to the Rhine. This was an unpardonable blunder. The conquest of the Rhine always appeared so easy that it was almost amusing. It was a distraction which Louvois thought might be given to the dauphin and to the crippled

bastard, the beloved Duc du Maine. So could the goodwill of Louis and of Madame de Maintenon, who had a particular affection for the child who was not her own, be restored.

At all costs Louis should have kept England on his side. But, while he was taking Rhineland towns, William decided to leave Holland. With fifteen thousand men he went to England. The expedition had been announced. There was nothing secretive in the descent on the British coast. Louis lifted not a finger to stop him. On November 15, 1688, William landed at Torbay. Cold was his reception. He had practically nobody for him; all he had was a small army of mercenaries, and a few French Huguenots. He won because James fled. The queen was conducted to France by Lauzun, and James quickly followed. Henceforward, Saint-Germain was to be the home of the former king and the British royal family were to be pensioners of Louis.

The bloodless revolution in England was more than the substitution of one king for another. It was the changing of England from an apparent friend to an obstinate enemy. It was a challenge, clear and unmistakable, to all for which Louis stood. Chiefly he stood for Catholicism and for absolute monarchy. Catholicism, to which Louis and James had tried to convert England, was utterly routed by the accession of the Calvinist William. Absolute monarchy was

JAMES II OF ENGLAND IN EXILE AT SAINT-GERMAIN

equally discredited by the British Parliament. Between prince and people there was, declared the British Parliament, a contract. The doctrine of Rousseau was already framed, and was opposed to the doctrine of Louis. Never again could monarchy by Divine Right be accepted in England. Constitutional government, parliamentary government, popular government, began. Louis was the ultimate expression of absolute rule. William was a convenient embodiment of popular rule. So between France and England there was a conflict of principles. A conflict of principles must necessarily be more bitter than a conflict of interests. England was the heart of the subsequent Continental coalitions against France. France, until her own revolution, was the stronghold of conservatism. Louis committed an even greater error than the material error of losing England: he committed the moral error of making France the leader of reaction —France who had been, a century earlier, the leader of progress. The Hapsburgs had been the enemy of Europe; now the Bourbons were the enemy of Europe, and could not cease to be until they were destroyed root and branch.

At the beginning of February 1689, the Coalition declared war on France. Yet the position of France was not desperate. The Coalition lacked solidity, and it had many preoccupations. Louis could put nearly four hundred thousand soldiers in the field, and he

had a fleet of 270 vessels. It was true that money was not plentiful. But money could be raised somehow. Louis did not cease to be magnificent. James and his queen at Saint-Germain lived royally. They were surrounded by a brilliant court. Externally, so far as their eyes could range, nothing had altered for them. Decidedly Louis knew how to do things in style. The queen was supplied with a sumptuous wardrobe and a well-filled purse. The dethroned king was likewise provided with a well-filled purse and a splendid wardrobe. He was to have 600,000 francs a year for his household. He had a fine guard and a crowd of servitors. Numerous fêtes were given in his honour. It was at one of these fêtes that *Esther*, the allusive play of Racine, was produced for the first time by the charming inmates of Saint-Cyr—the girls whom Madame de Maintenon regarded as her "daughters." It was a moving spectacle, for the references to the plight of James were understood by everybody. The girls recited the sorrows of exile, and the happiness of the return home:

"Je reverrai ces campagnes si chères;
J'irai pleurer au tombeau de mes pères."

These sentimental effusions, which brought tears to the eyes of the two kings, had their counterpart in the terrible destruction of the Palatinate. Louvois ordered that destruction. The design was to place "a

desert" between France and Germany. Towns were burnt, villages were destroyed. The vines were pulled up and the fruit trees were cut down. It is calculated that a hundred thousand persons were rendered homeless. They became howling missionaries for vengeance. The horror that was provoked by this odious execution gave fresh forces to the League of Augsburg. An indignant Europe denounced France. The outcry was so loud that it reached the ears of the king, and in endeavouring to exculpate himself he publicly reproached Louvois. Louvois, unabashed, proposed that Trèves should be treated in the same manner, and Louis, the forceful-feeble master who was not master of his minister, fell into a childish rage.

If only Louis could retrieve his mistake in allowing William to ascend the steps of the throne, the Coalition would be destroyed! Therefore, he not only offered James royal hospitality, but proposed to fight for him. On the Rhine the French need only take up an offensive attitude, for the Turks were worrying the emperor on the Danube. Spain and Savoy were weak, and could be attacked at pleasure by Louis's troops. The navy could be profitably used. Ireland was a Catholic country and deeply regretted the advent of William. It called to James, and James, helped by Louis, responded. He left Brest with a squadron of French ships, and an army of British refugees and auxiliary French troops. Convoys were sent from

Havre and Rochefort. The British and the Dutch failed to stop the French ships. In Bantry Bay, Château-Renaud thwarted the Anglo-Dutch fleet. Off Beachy Head, Tourville sank many enemy vessels and put the rest to flight. Despite the united fleets of England and Holland, France appeared to have secured the mastery of the seas.

James, however, showed the same incapacity in Ireland that he had shown in England. He was received with enthusiasm at Dublin. But soon he contrived to discontent his partisans. He hesitated, he procrastinated, he neglected to profit by the superiority of his troops. The siege of Londonderry cost him time which might have been used to better advantage. In the spring of 1690 Louis sent reinforcements, commanded by Lauzun, the husband of the Grande Mademoiselle. Against Lauzun and James was ranged the Maréchal de Schomberg—the same marshal who had illustriously served France, but was driven from the service of France by the Revocation, and who thereupon attached himself to William. Always do we find these Protestant refugees in the path of Louis. They, in this or that way, brought about his defeat.

Schomberg, with inferior forces, obliged James and Lauzun to abandon the siege of Londonderry, and presently the arrival of William with a strong army completely transformed the situation. William and

Schomberg marched to meet James. At the river Boyne, the reigning king and the dethroned king, the son-in-law and the father-in-law, encountered each other on July 11, 1690. Schomberg was killed, but not until his action had determined the victory of William. James and Lauzun fled to France, where they were welcomed as though they were victorious.

At this time died Madame la Dauphine (April 1690). She was the mother of three children, the Duc de Bourgogne, the prospective heir to the throne, whose education had been confided to Fénelon, the Duc d'Anjou, who later became King of Spain; and the Duc de Berri, who died without progeny.

In 1690 were several French victories. In the Low Countries was the Maréchal de Luxembourg. He had shown audacity and skill under Condé. Now he was in command against the Prince of Waldeck. At Fleurus he cleverly outflanked the enemy, taking advantage of elevated country which hid his movements. Waldeck was obliged to retreat; Luxembourg pushed his attack; six thousand men of the Allied troops were killed, and eight thousand taken prisoners. A hundred standards were captured; they were sent to Notre-Dame and hung in the cathedral aisles. Louis burned to make his appearance in a successful campaign, and the following year he joined Luxembourg to participate in the siege of Mons. Sieges remained his favourite means of distinguishing himself, and

once more he was able to gather laurels. Although William, firmly seated on the throne of England, crossed to the Continent to save Hainaut, he was unable to disperse the besieging army. He dared not attack. He could only play for time. Nor did his presence inspire courage in the garrison of Mons. After nine days the town capitulated. Thereupon Louis returned in triumph to Compiègne. Not until the following year did he again come into the field, this time to watch Luxembourg besiege Namur. This was the strongest of the strongholds in the Low Countries. It was situated at the junction of the Sambre and Meuse. Its château was built on a steep rock. Its garrison was ample. But the genius of Vauban was irresistible. Everything was ready when Louis, leaving Versailles in the middle of May, arrived before the town with an army of more than thirty thousand men. With him were the dauphin, the Duc d'Orléans, the Prince de Condé, and his best generals: Luxembourg with sixty thousand men was to cover the siege operations to prevent the Allies from relieving the town. The garrison put up a vigorous resistance. Once more William could only look on, not daring to attack. Once more he experienced the mortification of seeing Namur, like Mons taken before his eyes. Louis revelled in his new glory. He wrote himself a glowing account of the victory, and having thus

satisfied his predilection for spectacular triumphs, he returned to Versailles.

On the Rhine the war was mainly defensive. The Maréchal Duras initiated the dauphin into the cruelties of warfare, and he was succeeded, after the burning of the Palatinate, by the Duc de Lorges, a nephew of Turenne. It was not his purpose to do more than to hold the imperialists in check behind "the desert" which had been created. But in Italy, where Catinat was in command, other battles were won. Catinat was not a great general, but he was methodical. He was also ruthless. In Piedmont he repeated the operation of the Palatinate. Villages were burnt, vines uprooted, trees felled. The Duc de Savoie, Victor Amadeus, who had joined the League of Augsburg, hurried to give battle to Catinat at Staffarda (August 1690). The French overwhelmed his army, and Savoie, Nice, and Piedmont lay at the mercy of Catinat.

But now there comes upon the scene Prince Eugène. Eugène and Marlborough were to give the greatest anxiety to France a little later. The prince was the son of the superb Olympe, Comtesse de Soissons, the niece of Mazarin. He was destined for the church, but he preferred the army. Doubtless he would have entered the service of the king, but his mother had fallen into disgrace; and when he applied for a commission it was refused him. Therefore, embittered

against Louis, he left France in disguise and went to Vienna where the Emperor Leopold welcomed him. Against the Turks he displayed his talent, and he was put at the head of a regiment of dragoons. A decree of banishment was issued by Louis against Frenchmen serving in foreign armies, and this, of course, applied to Eugène. "The King will see me again," said Eugène; and he kept his word.

He came with powerful reinforcements to Victor Amadeus. He forced Catinat to return to France. In the Dauphiné severe reprisals were taken for the burning of the Palatinate. Three years later, however, Catinat inflicted a second defeat near Staffarda—Marsaglia—on Victor Amadeus.

At sea the French fleet suffered a blow from which it never recovered. Louis planned a landing in England. He was more than ever resolved to replace James on the throne. Transports were held in readiness at Brest. The Chevalier de Tourville, one of France's finest seamen, was to escort the French army and attack the Anglo-Dutch fleet. Unhappily for him the Comte d'Estrées, who was to sail from Toulon to strengthen the fleet of Tourville, encountered contrary winds. Thus Tourville, with vastly inferior forces, was obliged by his orders to attack. The enemy possessed nearly a hundred vessels, while he had not half that number. In these conditions was fought the battle of La Hougue at the end of May, 1692. The

combat lasted all night. At one time Tourville's ship was engaged with six of the Allied ships. Nearly every French ship was assailed on either flank. The Anglo-Dutch, in spite of their superiority, were held in check. But the next day Tourville realized that he could not sustain such an unequal combat. He was compelled to sail for French harbours. Seven of his ships entered Brest. Twenty-two successfully passed the perilous Race of Alderney and made for Saint-Malo. Then the tide turned and the rest of his fleet could not make headway. Three of them were burnt at Cherbourg. Twelve entered the harbour of La Hougue. The situation was hopeless. There was nothing to do but set the ships on fire to save them from capture.

This was by no means the end of the French fleet, but it was nevertheless badly shattered, materially and morally. What was still worse from the point of view of Louis, the French designs against England had failed. Had it been possible to make a sudden descent on English shores James might have replaced William, with consequences that are incalculable. For Louis had rightly seen that the centre of the opposition, the soul of the alliance, was England. Henceforward he was to fight with varying results, but without real hope of striking the enemy decisively.

William continued to harass the French on land. Defeats for William seemed to mean nothing. They

were the food on which he thrived. He never allowed himself to be disappointed. He never gave up. After the fall of Namur he attacked Luxembourg at Steinkirk. Luxembourg was sick and allowed himself to be surprised. A captured spy had been compelled by William to send misleading statements to the French general who thought himself secure. When William struck at dawn the French army was asleep. It was routed, and Luxembourg himself had to fly. But he rallied his troops. He had with him the Duc de Chartres, afterwards regent, then a mere boy. He had with him the grandson of Condé, Louis de Bourbon, and a great-nephew of Condé, the Prince de Conti, and a grandson of Henri IV, the Duc de Vendôme. This was indeed a gilded brigade. But they charged gallantly. They reversed the position, though with great slaughter on both sides. The Maréchal de Boufflers, who had camped some distance away, arrived in time to assist his compatriots. Once more William was beaten, but he retired in good order. As may be expected, this snatching of victory from defeat, by the valour of young princes, created a great impression on the French; and when the Duc de Chartres, the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Conti, and the Duc de Vendôme returned to Paris, they were met by delirious crowds. Indeed, they were so popular that their hasty battlefield attire inspired a new fashion. It was the mode to wear cravats of lace, extremely complicated,

demanding leisure for their arrangement. Aroused at the last moment, they had put on their cravats carelessly; and the women of the court, imitating their example, now wore neck ornaments whose effect was enhanced by a pretended négligé—ornaments which were called Steinkirks.

France could not continue the war for an indefinite period. Whatever was won was won to no purpose, and the losses were appalling. Moreover, the king was feeling the effects of age. He had need of repose and so had his people. His personal courage was questioned; though it was not courage that Louis lacked, it was vigour. He would willingly have made peace, but William was tenacious and showed no desire to begin negotiations. The king reorganized his armies and promoted his officers. His army had grown into half a million men—and this was the largest number that had been known in modern Europe. He decided to make another attempt, and in 1693 went to join his troops in Flanders. But he was unwell, and he was besought not to endanger himself. After entrusting the command to Luxembourg, and sending the dauphin to the Rhine, he went back to Versailles, and never again put himself at the head of his armies.

Luxembourg found William entrenched at Neerwinden between Liège and Louvain. The bloodiest of battles was fought. The French infantry for the first time charged steadily with their bayonets. The

Allies fired eighty cannon continuously on the French cavalry, who calmly closed up their ranks. The slaughter was terrific. On the Allied side there were fifteen thousand slain, and on the French side ten thousand. It was the French who carried the day, but the victory was unavailing. Instead of marching on Brussels, Luxembourg died without having accomplished any other notable exploit; and the Duc de Villeroy who succeeded him was quite ineffectual.

At sea Tourville took his revenge near the Cape Saint-Vincent. He captured many English and Dutch vessels and burnt many more. Famous corsairs, such as Jean-Bart and Duguay-Trouin, harried Dutch and English commerce. English and Dutch ships bombarded Saint-Malo, Dieppe, Le Havre, Dunkirk, Calais. The war took on a character of exceptional violence and cruelty. Nothing was respected. Pitiless was the destruction. Calamity followed calamity. In 1694 there was no important battle except perhaps that gained in Catalonia by the Maréchal de Noailles. In the following year William recaptured Namur, and Villeroy bombarded Brussels. By 1696 there was a general desire for peace, and both sides deliberately avoided pitched battles. The Duc de Savoie negotiated with Louis. It was decided that territory should be ceded to him; Nice and even Pignerol were given to the duke, while it was agreed that Marie Adelaïde, his daughter, should marry the Duc de Bourgogne,

eldest son of the dauphin. The defection of the Duc de Savoie was followed by others, and the League began to break up. William was still animated by the desire of humiliating Louis, but Queen Mary, who had brought him the throne of England, was now dead, and the Stuarts and their partisans were actively intriguing. The war was unpopular in England. It was time that it should cease.

At Ryswick (near the Hague) Louis recognized William III as the lawful King of England, and undertook never again to help James to recover the crown. It was still necessary to compel Spain and the Empire to yield, and Louis pushed hostilities against them both. The Spanish king, Charles II, was dying. He had no child. The problem of his succession was becoming acute. On October 30, 1697, peace was definitely concluded. France made immense restitutions. With the exception of Strasbourg, she kept little of all her conquests. Nearly all that had been captured in the Low Countries, the Empire, and Spain, was restored; even Lorraine, which France had occupied for sixty years, was surrendered; the Dutch were permitted to garrison Flemish towns; commercial concessions were likewise made to the Dutch, and Colbert's protectionism was altogether abandoned. Against this record of loss are to be placed the French gains in Hudson Bay and Newfoundland. It was a paltry reward for ten years of blood-spilling and of

financial embarrassments. Yet France, by gigantic efforts, had certainly shown that she could hold her own against the leagued might of Europe.

Even now Louis was thinking of the final struggle which was looming ahead for the throne of Spain. The miseries which he had brought upon his country were not enough. In his sixtieth year he was weary; France was sad; but the glittering prize of Spain still offered a temptation.

Chapter Twenty

AN ILLUSTRIOUS AGE

CERTAINLY the age of Louis XIV was illustrious, and the list of *beaux esprits* given by Voltaire is impressive—though he actually mentions a number of writers and philosophers who were not even French, and who could not properly be said to owe anything to France, much less to Louis. The seventeenth century is, for most commentators, *le grand siècle;* yet Michelet, in one of his lectures, affirmed that when he spoke of the *grand siècle* he meant the eighteenth—the eighteenth that was to reverse the ideals of the seventeenth. But we must not exaggerate in either sense; and if it is ridiculous to denigrate the age of Louis, it is absurd to extol Louis as though he were the author and begetter of the great men who were his contemporaries. Voltaire admits that Corneille formed himself, but he insists that Racine was formed by Louis XIV, Colbert, Sophocles, and Euripides. The participation of the king and his minister in this paternity cannot be seriously upheld. Racine was much more topical than appears at first sight, but if the circumstances of the

day provided him with allusions they did not provide him with his genius. The suggestion is that Louis introduced a new classical tone, that his court was elegant, correct, refined, and that Racine found competent judges in the palaces. In fact, when *Athalie*, his masterpiece, was produced in 1702, in the residence of the Duchesse de Bourgogne (wife of Louis's grandson) it was damned. Molière was certainly aided throughout his career by the friendship of Louis and of Monsieur (though such friendship could only secure him midnight burial), and, in general, the royal encouragement of letters may have determined the precise form given to various works. But it is absurd to suppose that under another king literary talent would not have found fitting expression.

Yet it is certain that French literature was peculiarly enriched in the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century by works which still appear as the quintessence of the French spirit. After the Fronde there was comparative social tranquillity—though there was great suffering among the people. The wars and misfortunes did not disturb the harmonious court life—on the contrary, they furnished fresh subject-matter and inspiration to writers. But many of the names which are often associated with that of Louis were well-known before he had emerged from his dull boyhood. Descartes and Pascal, though they belong to the age of Louis, had already reached their

zenith. Madame de Sévigné and La Fontaine came to maturity before Louis. Bossuet was already a famous preacher; La Rochefoucauld owed nothing to the king; Boileau had begun to pen his satires before Mazarin died. Poussin, the outstanding painter of the century, died in 1665.

Nevertheless, though it is well to correct the current view of Louis's influence on the arts; it is true that, according to his lights, he encouraged them. He endeavoured to annex the *beaux esprits* of his time as he annexed the Rhineland territory. He was aware that his own praises would be sung by those whom he rewarded; and he had an insatiable thirst for praise. When there was criticism of himself, implicit or explicit, he lost his judgment completely and cared nothing for genius; for example, Vauban, who had rendered him incalculable services, wrote a book in which he pleaded for religious tolerance, and suggested a single tax payable by all classes: Louis immediately sent the book to the pillory. Jansenism, in spite of its great advocates, had, in Louis, an ignorant adversary. Even the talents of the enigmatic Fénelon did not plead for him—he fell into disgrace and failed in his ambition to become Archbishop of Paris. Subserviency was expected in those over whom Louis threw his protection; though occasionally he might good-humouredly permit Boileau to get the better of him in

literary discussion, as he might lose with good grace at the card-tables.

Louis looked upon literature as a kingly ornament, and as contributing to his own fame. Just as Mansart and Le Nôtre gave him mansions and gardens which would enhance his glory, just as La Brun was engaged to paint him as a god on his own ceilings, so were dramatists and poets regarded as admirable royal servants. Molière, appointed as valet to the king, was actually used as a tool in the petty intrigues of Versailles: he was appreciated by Louis because he satirized the courtiers spiritedly, and sometimes the king condescended to collaborate with him, by drawing attention to those whom he desired to ridicule. That, it is to be feared, was Louis's conception of Molière's rôle; perhaps Molière himself would not altogether have repudiated the conception.

In so far as Louis could control literature, his idea was to make it uniform. Just as we have seen that the subjects of Louis were expected to accept the king's religion, so were they expected to accept the king's æsthetic tastes. He was not, it is true, the first to think of officializing art. Richelieu had begun it, but Colbert was an effective continuator. The reign of Louis meant the reign of the academies, with all that it implied of bad as well as of good: and the bad certainly predominates. A French writer properly remarks: "He attempted to erect worthy temples of the

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mind and of learning, in which the rules of literature should be drawn up, its tone decided, and its limits set. The members of these bodies were public functionaries, their pensions and rewards for attendance were their salaries." The academies covered all the departments of human knowledge. They were corporations of literature, science, and painting. Now there is one supreme condition demanded by the arts—and that is liberty. Louis's whole approach is the proof of his complete misunderstanding. The truth is that the French language was undergoing a natural crystallization. Earlier authors had charmed by their naïveté. Later authors had fallen into bombast. Now French writers discovered the happy medium. They strove for classic grace. They were keenly sensitive to harmonious phrases. Eloquence was often false, but it was pleasing. The language was purified and given permanent shape. With or without the academies, there would have been this crystallization. It went, indeed, too far. When Furetière prepared his dictionary, which was not a museum of dead words but a compendium of living language, the Académie tried to stifle it, and it was published in Holland only after his death.

Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) is the father of French tragedy, though he began by writing polite comedies. In 1636 appeared *Le Cid* inspired by Spanish literature. The drama consists in the clash of op-

posing sentiments. A problem of passions is posed. Herein lies the appeal of all subsequent French tragedies. Though it had an unprecedented success, the Académie Française condemned it as too free in treatment: and Corneille thereupon adopted stricter rules as laid down by the ancient Greeks. He placed his characters in an historical frame, and chose such themes as patriotism (Horace), clemency (Cinna), immolation to divine ideals (*Polyeucte*). He also anticipated Molière in writing a comedy of character (*Le Menteur*). The court forgot Corneille; he survived his own popularity; and Louis can hardly be credited with the great dramatist he neglected.

La Rochefoucauld (1613-1689) with his *Maxims* sharpened the French appreciation of precision. The writing of maxims was a social amusement, about 1660, in the circle of Madame de Sablé. La Rochefoucauld expressed himself more exactly and strikingly than the others. His single thought is that all our acts are dictated by selfish motives. He did not mean to be cynical, but, on the contrary, to put us on our guard against hypocrisy; and indeed the Jansenists (with whom Louis had nothing in common) highly approved of these clean-cut aphorisms.

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was the leading spirit of the Jansenists. The doctrine of grace was condemned by Rome, and the Jansenists were persecuted by Louis. The principal adversaries of the Jansenists

were the Jesuits, who were more indulgent than the austere theologians of Port-Royal and would have made the practice of religion pleasant. Pascal in his *Lettres Provinciales*, sharply criticizes Jesuitical casuistry. These writings are a model of every kind of eloquence—witty, logical, passionate, sublime. The subject matter is less interesting today, but the style, clear, vivid, varied, vigorous, makes them a literary landmark. Indeed, Pascal was a many-sided man, mathematician, physicist, inventor, of wonderful intelligence, and he deserves to be honoured as one of the geniuses of his century.

The eloquence of the pulpit—virtually the only kind of oratory—was in high renown. Bossuet and Bourdaloue were the most distinguished preachers. Bourdaloue was not florid; he endeavoured to convince and not merely to delight; he was a favourite of the court. The versions that remain of his sermons have been expurgated and rendered monotonous. The court of Louis ranked him above Bossuet, whose fame is based chiefly on his funeral orations. Unlike Bourdaloue, Bossuet called freely on his imagination; he is poetic and sometimes attains real grandeur. He wrote for the dauphin his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, in which he majestically describes the rise and fall of great empires and depicts the characters of nations. Fénelon, a subtle and complex man, composed *Télémaque* for his pupil, the Duc de Bourgogne,

grandson of Louis—a curious work to place in the hands of the boy, for it contains the most severe though veiled criticisms of the extravagant triumphs, the luxurious establishments, of Louis XIV. He was attracted by the quietism of Madame Guyon, a devout woman of mystical temperament; and the church's condemnation of ecstatic contemplation, at the instance of Bossuet, was a severe blow to Fénelon. Thereafter he remained in a sort of exile in his archbishopric of Cambrai where he was, however, visited by his former pupil.

La Bruyère (1645-1696) introduced a new kind of writing in *Les Caractères*. Its rapid nervous style, its picturesque expressions, its novelty and refinement of language, its implied criticism of society, caused it to run into many editions both in France and abroad. La Bruyère was instructor to the son of Condé.

Perhaps no period has ever been revealed to us so frankly by a host of memorialists. There is, greatest of them all, Saint-Simon (1671-1755), who has drawn portraits of the notabilities of the reign, and who, despite strong prejudices, displays an extraordinary sense of character. His psychological perception is keen, he is undoubtedly honest, and he shows us, for the most part, men and women as they veritably were. His portraits are incomparable. In an altogether different way, Madame de Sévigné (1626-1696) in her letters is illuminating. Her style is most

vivacious: she is sprightly, sensitive, observant, imaginative; and she paints an invaluable picture of the time. The Princess Palatine who succeeded Henriette as Madame left astonishingly lifelike but malicious memoirs which are coloured by her dislikes. Madame de Motteville was on intimate terms with Anne of Austria and admits us into that intimacy. The Abbé de Choisy wrote entertainingly, Dangeau complacently, while Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, shows a rare talent for narrative, and a marvellous understanding of the political events and personages of his time. These are only a few of the productions in this branch of literature which enable us to reconstruct the age of Louis better than any other.

The four great classical masters who triumphed in the time of Louis were Boileau, Molière, Racine, and La Fontaine. They are, indeed, properly to be associated with the king. It was in 1660 that Louis really began to reign; and it was in that year that Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux composed his first satire. At that date, it may be said, French classical literature arrived. There is, in spite of individual differences of style, a certain unity of tone in all the classical productions that followed. Preciosity, bombast, and burlesque, were doomed; and Boileau's merit is that he attacked critics, poets, novelists, playwrights, who stood for these things, and dexterously defended the new classical school. In his *Art Poétique* he holds

that reason must mould poetic faculty, and beauty must be sought in truth. Words must not be used for their own sake, but for the expression of ideas. Ingenious rhyming should be subordinated to good sense. Nature is held up as the model, but there must be rule and order—not arbitrarily established, but founded on experience. Such rationalism, applied to literature, may strike us as frigid and false; but it is certainly in consonance with the French genius; and it was accepted as the ideal. It is well to insist that there were three elements in this doctrine: though reason should dominate the work, nature should be the subject, and the precepts of antiquity should govern the form.

Molière (1622-1673), or Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, was the classical master in comedy. He eschewed the romantic. He rejected the extravagant farce which was in favour. He was not seduced by the mock-heroic and the precious. The ludicrous, the caricatural which had figured in the Italian comedy, he discarded. It was Molière's aim to depict the manners of his age, to base his comic drama upon truth. In his best work he cares little for plot, and much for character. His men and women tend to become types, but they never become abstract. From the particular he deduces the universal. Sganarelle, Scapin, Pourceaugnac, Yourdain, Georges Daudin, Orgon, Chrysale, Alceste, Arnolphe, Harpagon, Tarbufe, Céli-

mene, Philinte, are deathless personages of the *Comédie Française* of Molière. Often he wrote hastily, but usually he satisfies the most exacting classical critics. His own purpose was simply to please. He owes nothing to any literary school; he is a creator. Naturally the Académie refused to admit him into its midst.

Jean Racine (1639-1699), like Molière, had great court successes. It was in 1667 that he produced *Andromaque*, and so fashioned a dramatic art that differed considerably from that of Corneille. Corneille is overfond of action. Racine cares only for character; and the action is intended to illustrate character. He, too, reacts against the purely romantic. He, too, shrinks from the arbitrarily heroic. His drama is "interior"; and love is his principal theme. Nobody has better explored and expressed feminine sensibilities. He exquisitely analyses human passions in musical Alexandrines charged with images. As he grew older he became more profound. After the cabal against *Phèdre*, he neglected the theatre for twelve years, and then returned with *Esther*, whose subject is taken from Scripture, and with *Athalie*, in which he displays intense religious feeling and rises to the topmost heights of beauty.

Jean de La Fontaine (1622-1695) forms a strange contrast to the three classical writers who excel in epistolary poetry, in comedy, and in tragedy; yet if

he displays greater freedom and simplicity, and indulges pleasantly in *gauloiseries*, he nevertheless belongs to the group because of his sense of proportion, his perfection of language, his affection for form. He is natural, rational, and classic. His fables, miniature dramas, are full of observation, restrained fancy, deft moralizings, couched in the most picturesque and appropriate words.

Undoubtedly France was in the forefront of literature in the seventeenth century. Her superiority was recognized and had an enormous influence in Europe. In painting, too, the seventeenth century takes a prominent place, though not as prominent a place as is taken by the previous century. Poussin, who died early in the reign of Louis, and who lived chiefly at Rome, is generally regarded as the most masterly of French painters. He taught Le Sueur, Le Brun, and Mignard. Le Sueur belongs to the early part of Louis's reign: he died in 1665. Le Brun, whose methods were more pompous, may properly be taken as the representative Ludovician painter. He was engaged to decorate Versailles; for fourteen years he stuck to his job; and he was the undisputed authority on art. Yet this favourite of Louis does not compare with either Poussin or Le Sueur. A fair estimate of his work must relegate him to the second rank. He helped to found the French school at Rome to which go the winners of the Grand Prix. In painting, as in literature, the

influence of Louis, so far as he could exercise it, was academic and made for mediocrity.

Claude Gelée—generally known as Claude Lorrain—is among the greatest painters of the age; few landscape artists before him had so admirably caught the effect of sky and water. Watteau, who is likewise associated with Louis, began his career after the eighteenth century had opened; his pastorals are mannered, but are delightfully evocative of the gallantry of the day.

In sculpture Puget was magnificent. Some of his figures are almost unrivalled for strength and truth. Puget was born at Marseilles, and he carved figures in wood for the ships. It is said that when Louis sent to Rome for a sculptor, his emissary came by accident at Toulon on the caryatids of Puget in the porch of the Hôtel de Ville.

"There is no need to seek artists at Rome," said he, "when there is in France the man who has made these." So to Paris Puget was brought. When Marie-Thérèse saw his Milon de Crotone group—the athlete caught by the cleft in the tree trunk, being devoured by a lion—she exclaimed, "Oh, the poor man! How he suffers!" But though Puget was well received at Versailles, and made some of his finest statuary for Louis, he was too independent in manner and in purpose to remain long in the graces of the king. There were other sculptors who worked for

Louis—Coysevox, Girardon, the Coustous—admirable in their way but without the power of Puget. Their graceful works decorate the Tuileries and Versailles.

In music Lulli pleased the king. He was made an official of the court. This Italian, who came to Paris as a young man and won such high renown, shows in music the same characteristics as were shown in the painting preferred by Louis. His compositions are exquisite but artificial, ornamental but pithless. His charming mediocrity is truly in the note of the court. He and Quinault were the founders of French opera.

Long as was the reign of Louis, the architectural monuments which he left scarcely compare with those of an earlier age. The perfection of the Renaissance châteaux was not approached. The old Louvre, Fontainebleau, and the Tuileries were palaces which possessed a distinction lacking to Versailles. Versailles is more imposing—one may even describe it, with its extraordinary perspectives, as more magnificent. But it is a colder production, and admirable as it is one cannot help regarding it chiefly as a *tour de force.* Jules Hardouin Mansart began the work in 1661, and since he was begrudged neither time nor money, could not fail to produce something grandiose. But it was a grandiosity without inspiration. It was a grandiosity in full accord with the royal taste. He and his successors continued to build Versailles to the very end

of the reign of Louis. There was a series of palaces built or improved around Paris—splendid whims, costly failures. Val-de-Grâce with its decorations by Mignard, the Observatoire, designed by Claude Perrault, the unprepossessing arches of Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin, the Invalides with its beautiful cupola by Mansart, the Place des Victoires wherein was set up the equestrian statue of Louis to be worshipped, and the Place Vendôme where a Napoleonic Column now replaces the original monument to Louis—these are a few of the reminders of the reign at Paris. The Institut de France—originally the Collège Mazarin—was built by Le Vau; while the Tuileries Gardens were carried to the Champs-Elysées by Le Nôtre. Part of the Louvre was constructed, notably the colonnade and the façade on the Seine, and a portion of the façade on the Rue de Rivoli.

This list is certainly not exhaustive. It would have been strange had France not produced able men in all intellectual departments in the long period which is covered by the reign of Louis; but it remains true that, after Corneille, the age of Louis can chiefly boast of the four poets and dramatists, La Fontaine, Molière, Racine, and Boileau. They are enough for any country. Moreover, Voltaire was born in the closing years; and Montesquieu, Buffon, and others who were to dominate the eighteenth century appeared. Their

spirit was different: after Louis the Revolution began to herald its approach.

Louis was essentially anti-revolutionary in every respect, and while he lived freedom of thought was suppressed as far as it is possible to suppress it. He set himself up as the final arbiter, not merely in matters of administration, but in matters over which no king can possess control. The doctrine of Divine Right had for him an unlimited application. He informed his son that all authority, of whatsoever character, could only be derived from the monarch. He brought Parliament to submission, and he broke the power of the nobles. Against them he employed the middle classes, placing their members in political, judicial, and financial offices. Louis, paradoxical as this may appear, gave France a more conscious bourgeoisie and against his intentions helped to create a democratic country. The church itself Louis endeavoured to make subservient to his designs. He denied the supremacy of the pope. In temporal affairs (according to the propositions adopted by the French clergy in 1682) the pope had no power, and even in spiritual affairs the general councils were superior to the pope. The Gallican church upheld the regalian rights of Louis. Yet when Louis's own infallibility was called into question, as it seemed to be by the Jansenists, and the Quietists, and the Calvinists, Louis stood by the pope. The police system, with its arbitrary censorship

of correspondence, and its *lettres de cachet*, was developed by him as an auxiliary of absolute monarchial power; while the army was employed not only against the enemies of France but against the best citizens of France who happened not to think precisely as thought Louis.

The grovelling of the courtiers, which Louis demanded, was a baneful example; nearly the whole nation grovelled—and those who would not grovel were treated ignominiously. It was doubtless historically necessary to break up feudalism, which, carried to extremes, set up a number of anti-royal centres; but it was a mistake, except from the viewpoint of the king's personal position, to empty the country mansions. In the time of Henri IV the nobles were encouraged to remain on their estates, to rally round them their servitors and their tenants, to maintain a large social family in whose prosperity they were both sentimentally and economically interested. In the time of Louis XIV the country mansions were left to decay, and the life of the countryside declined. Its rulers were the soulless emissaries of the king. Those who should have been the natural protectors of the people were kicking their gilded heels in antechambers; acquiring superficial graces; striving for the royal smile. Basking in the royal sunlight, they strove for posts and spoils; they became dependents, superior servants. Their manners may have been more cultured, but their

dignity had disappeared. There was mock piety and universal debauch. Immorality and intolerance existed side by side. Hypocrisy and vice were fitting companions. The megalomania of Louis meant the deterioration of France in every domain; and servility was the breeding-ground of evils which were to produce irretrievable disaster.

Michelet, in one of his incomparable chapters, has dealt with the writings of Pierre Jurieu, the French Protestant theologian, who, taking refuge in Holland, printed *Les Soupirs de la France Esclave.* Those sighs of an enslaved country were premonitory of the revolt which the eighteenth century was to bring forth. The Revocation was one of the causes of the revolution in England; it was also one of the remoter, though unquestionable, causes of the revolution in France. Jurieu asserted that duties implied rights, and rights implied duties. The people made their kings, and ultimately the people were superior to their kings. When, asked Bossuet in reply, was the contract between prince and people signed? A foolish question! It was just as easy to ask when and in what manner the prince received the power of treating his people as he pleased. Even God himself, answered Jurieu, has made a contract with Man. If he ceased to be just, he would cease to be God. Thus were the foundations of our modern world foreseen and proclaimed by Jurieu before Rousseau. The religious

protest was already being transformed into a political protest. It was not a question of Catholicism and Protestantism. Jurieu spoke for the Catholics as well as for the Protestants. He spoke for France. He called for the old liberties; he called for the States-General. For, be it remarked, those who acted as oppressors, were themselves oppressed. The Catholics were in general, though not so specifically, treated almost as badly as the Protestants. The traditional gaiety of France was suppressed. Life had become hard for everybody, for rich and poor alike. But the uneasy arrogance of Louis was already being humbled. It was to be humbled still more—humbled to the dust. And the apotheosis of absolute monarchy, built, in this "illustrious age," on the bitter boyhood of Louis, was to perish for ever.

Chapter Twenty-one

THE SUCCESSION OF SPAIN

LOUIS lived for eighteen years after the conclusion of the Peace of Ryswick but they were for the most part disastrous years. They were also heroic years. Mazarin's Machiavellian designs, which were given sly expression in the Treaty of the Pyrenees, came to fruition. Those conditions which were attached to the marriage of Louis were like an infernal machine. The clockwork bomb exploded long afterwards; but it was the hand of Mazarin that wound it up. The succession of Spain was a problem which dominated the whole of the adult life of the king. Marie-Thérèse was dead; but France could still put forward the claims of her offspring to the Spanish inheritance, for she renounced that inheritance only on condition that her dower was paid. As Mazarin had foreseen, the dower was never paid.

Ten years of gigantic efforts had exhausted France. The last years had diminished her glory. Louis, in his sixtieth year, was an isolated old man, sitting with a priest-ridden old woman who was muffled up, afraid

of catching cold, nursing her rheumatism, afraid of losing her influence over the king, who was still capable (as she thought)of falling in love with one of the younger intriguing ladies of the court. But she was safe enough; she was veritably the winter quarters of Don Juan. While she worked at her embroidery, Louis worked at his state papers. He listened to his ministers, but those ministers were now completely subordinate, persons without competence or authority. The Colberts and the Louvois had gone. The famous warriors of Louis had gone—the Turennes, the Condés, the Créquis, the Luxembourgs. The famous seamen—the Duquesnes and the Tourvilles—had gone. The literary stars in the Ludovician firmament —Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, Pascal, Madame de Sévigné, had gone. Louis was alone at the end of the century, with the ailing morose Madame de Maintenon, who would from time to time express her opinion, and turn again to her embroidery. So Louis wrote and dictated, dictated and wrote, laboriously, endeavouring to govern a country which was weary, gloomy, impoverished.

In the Council of State sat the dauphin and Mm. de Pomponne, Croissy, Le Peletier, Pontchartrain, de Beauvilliers. For internal affairs the council consisted of the dauphin and Monsieur, brother of the king, the chancellor, and various secretaries. In the Financial Councils were the princes and officials, among

whom we find D'Aguesseau. On Fridays the king held his Council of Conscience, with the Archbishop of Paris and his Jesuit confessor. Every evening he worked with Croissy on foreign affairs, with Pontchartrain on naval affairs, with Barbézieux on military affairs, the cough of Madame de Maintenon punctuating consultations.

It was a dull court. Sometimes the king would take a stroll; sometimes he would play at cards. Happily the future Duchesse de Bourgogne, Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie, brought a little cheerfulness to the old couple. She was only eleven years of age when she came to France, but her vivacity won the heart of the king, and, what is more extraordinary, the heart of Madame de Maintenon. When she was twelve she married Louis's grandson. This was in September 1697.

Saint-Simon tells us that never did a princess so young profit more by the lessons she had received. She was, however, not destined to reign. The Grand Dauphin died in 1711, and she and the Duc de Bourgogne, son of the Grand Dauphin, both died in 1712, leaving a little son who succeeded to the throne as Louis XV in 1715.

She was truly lovable, a dancing ray of sunshine in the melancholy household. Sweet and timid and adroit, light-hearted but considerate of others, the princess from Savoy had no need of prettiness to please.

She was indeed ugly, with hanging cheeks, bulging forehead, insignificant nose, large lips, and rotten teeth. Her complexion was good, and her eyes were sparkling, but she had a long misshapen neck and a flat chest. What did these things matter? She was graceful and gracious in manner and in speech. She could be amusing, and she could be serious. Louis was delighted with her, and Madame de Maintenon was overjoyed at being called "Ma tante." The wife of Louis was not publicly queen, but she was publicly the aunt of the little girl who would presumably be queen.

Charles II of Spain lived for three years after the Treaty of Ryswick. While he was dying, Europe was discussing who should be his successor. He had no children. His house was allied to the Austrian house. It was likewise allied to the French house. Louis saw with distress the prospect of the accession of the emperor, or a member of the family of the emperor, to the throne of Madrid. Thus would be undone everything that had been accomplished by the Valois and the Bourbons against the Austrian house. Moreover, England and Holland, enemies of France, were alarmed at the prospective union of the Empire and Spain. They were concerned with the equilibrium of Europe, which would be destroyed if two great powers came under one monarchy. But then it would be

equally destroyed if Louis, directly or indirectly, reigned at Madrid.

Was the renunciation of Marie-Thérèse valid? It could be argued that it did not hold, because the dower had not been paid. But even if it was valid for her and for her husband, could it be valid for the children and grandchildren of Marie-Thérèse and Louis? The best legal advice challenged the validity. On the other hand, another daughter of Philip IV of Spain, Marguerite-Thérèse, had married the Emperor Leopold. She had made no renunciation, but she, too, was dead. She had a daughter whom she had married to the Elector of Bavaria. The emperor had demanded that she should renounce her Spanish rights; but such a renunciation, made outside Spain, and imposed by a foreign monarch, was regarded by the Spanish as invalid. She, again, was dead, but she had left a son, six years of age, the present Elector of Bavaria; and this grandson of the Emperor Leopold was considered by the Spanish as the heir-presumptive of the Spanish throne. On the whole, the best solution seemed to be that the young Bavarian prince should succeed Charles.

Another European war looked inevitable. Louis was oppressed by his apparent impotence. He was fatigued, and France was fatigued. If some suitable bargain could be made, he would be agreeable. There were negotiations between Louis and William, and a

treaty was signed at the Hague in October 1698, by which the Prince Elector of Bavaria should receive the throne of Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, and the overseas possessions, while the Spanish possessions in Italy should be ceded to France, and the province of Milan to the Archduke Charles, second son of the emperor. The Spanish king was indignant that his monarchy should be divided up while he was still alive. He drew up a testament by which the Prince Elector of Bavaria was declared his sole inheritor, on condition that he opposed the dismemberment of the monarchy. Alas! the little prince died in February 1699.

The matter was thrown again into the melting-pot. Leopold pressed Charles to make a new will, this time in favour of the Archduke Charles. But the Austrians were disliked in Spain, while the Marquis d'Harcourt, the French ambassador in Madrid, by his magnificence, by his bribery, by his diplomatic ability, turned the current in favour of France. Louis was afraid, however, to claim the throne for one of his grandsons; and wrote that it was more advantageous for France to acquire fresh provinces than to obtain the Spanish throne. A second treaty was signed, giving Spain to the archduke, but dividing up the possessions of Spain among the various powers. Charles II thereupon considered it preferable to accept a French successor rather than an Austrian successor, since the

acceptance of the latter meant, according to this treaty, the breaking-up of Spain. To maintain the integrity of his dominions the king named Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, the second son of the dauphin, as his heir. So the French and Spanish thrones would be under different kings, though these kings, in due course, would presumably be brothers. If Philippe refused the crown, it should go to the third son of the dauphin, the Duc de Berri, and only in the last instance to the Archduke Charles.

A month later Charles II died. This was in November 1700. Now Louis was faced with a tremendous question. Should he accept the Spanish crown on behalf of Philippe, or should he hold to his treaty of partition with William III? From the French point of view there was no particular advantage in placing a French prince on the Spanish throne. He would soon identify himself with the Spanish people; and ties of blood are, in these matters of kingship, of little account. Moreover, under the Duc d'Anjou, Spain would preserve her integrity and be a potential enemy. That might prove awkward for France. Better to stick to the treaty with William and take whatever Spanish possessions were available. Louis plainly enough saw where the profit of France lay. He saw the prospect of another war if Philippe became King of Spain. His inclination was to refuse, and in this Madame de Maintenon wisely supported him.

But it is not thus easily that affairs of state can be settled. Louis lacked decision. A council was called at which there were present the dauphin, the Duc de Beauvilliers (Governor of the children of the House of France), the Marquis de Torcy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Chancellor Pontchartrain. The most important resolution of the century was to be taken. Louis asked for the independent advice of his councillors. Beauvilliers considered that French loyalty demanded a strict adherence to the treaty with William, which happened to be advantageous for France. He painted the misery of the people, the needs of the treasury, the burden of the debt, and the certainty of a universal war which might ruin France if the pretensions of Philippe were maintained. Torcy, while largely in agreement, remarked that if France refused the succession it would pass to Austria, and France would not obtain the benefits of the treaty with William to which the emperor was not a party; a war was therefore inevitable in any event, if not for the throne, then for the provinces which France claimed. Pontchartrain judiciously set out the considerations for and against. The dauphin, whose son was to be made king under the testament, clamoured for his rights.

For three days Louis hesitated. Finally pride carried the day. It seemed wonderful to obtain for France the kingship of a country which had been a

rival of France for three hundred years. Besides, Madame de Maintenon now ranged herself with the dauphin. On the morning of November 16, Louis arose; and after his *lever* he convoked the Spanish ambassador. The great double doors of the salon were dramatically thrown open. The duc d'Anjou was brought in. Louis exclaimed majestically: "You can salute your King!" The Spanish ambassador knelt, and kissed the hand of Philippe. The courtiers poured in. "Gentlemen," cried Louis, "I present to you the King of Spain. His birth calls him to take up the crown. Charles II has given it to him. The nobles demand his acceptance. The people desire him. I give my consent. It is the command of heaven." Turning to Philippe, he said: "Be a good Spaniard. That is now your duty. But remember that you were born a Frenchman. Preserve the union between the two nations. That is the way to make them happy and to keep the peace of Europe."

A journalist of the time invented the expression that has been attributed to Louis XIV: "There are now no Pyrenees." The Spanish ambassador used the grandiloquent phrase: "The Pyrenees have melted."

The Duc d'Anjou, now Philip V of Spain, was treated with deference by his grandfather, his uncle, and his brothers. The people of Paris, heedless of the coming storm, noisily expressed their joy. In Spain, in the Low Countries, at Milan, at Naples, in the Two

Sicilies, Philip was accepted with satisfaction. He left Versailles and made a triumphal progress to Madrid, which he entered the following year on April 21, amid the acclamations of the people.

But war loomed. Nobody wished it. Both Holland and England hesitated. William, in whose attempted assassination Louis had acquiesced a few years before, was now in ill-health and was, indeed, dying. The Emperor Leopold made open preparations, but alone he was not dangerous for France. It was as though some demon now pushed Louis to provocation. He who had been afraid to take the perilous step, lost control of his reason and again began to defy Europe. He omitted no measure that would turn Europe against France. James II died of apoplexy at Saint-Germain, and Louis declared that he recognized the son of the deposed king as the claimant to the throne of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It would have been strange had England not picked up this glove. Further, the relative complacency with which the accession of Philip V was received in Europe was due to the stipulation that the crowns of France and Spain should never be united. If Louis, and the Grand Dauphin and the eldest son of the Grand Dauphin all died—as they did, though the Duc de Bourgogne left a little son—and it was the turn of Philip to become King of France, his acceptance would be considered incompatible with his present holdership of the Span-

ish crown. This was perfectly clear. But suddenly Louis alarmed Europe by proclaiming in letters patent, registered in Parliament, that the Duc d'Anjou, King of Spain, preserved his rights to the crown of France in the natural order of succession. Such an act is almost inexplicable. It appears to be that of a madman. These alterations of timidity and of crazy audacity are surely pathological. The morbid pride of Louis was further shown in the letter which he wrote to the Duc d'Harcourt, the French ambassador at Madrid: "The welfare of my Kingdom will necessitate the taking of measures by the King of Spain to exclude the English and Dutch from the commerce of the Indies." Again Louis sent his troops to Belgium to drive the Dutch garrisons from the outposts which they held by virtue of the Treaty of Ryswick. The English had always been uneasy of encroachments of France in the Low Countries, and at one stroke Louis whipped the English and the Dutch into a rage. Certainly Louis tried to range on his side some of the German princes. The King of Portugal had made an alliance with Louis. The pope seemed favourable to him. The Italian princes had French leanings. The Duc de Savoie, however, was doubtful; and to secure him Louis demanded the hand of the second of his daughters, sister of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, for Philip V. He nominated the Savoy duke generalissimo of the French and Spanish armies in Italy and

gave him a handsome allowance. But even these attempts to form alliances were provocations. They forced England and Holland to make a counter-coalition. The Grande Alliance of the Hague was composed of England, Holland, and the Empire. The new King of Prussia, the King of Denmark, and the new Elector of Hanover, who was recognized as the heir to the English throne after the Princess Anne, also joined. Even Portugal became hostile to France when French ports were closed to her goods.

In reality the whole of Europe was against France and Spain—that is to say, the Spain of Philip V—with the exception of the Elector of Bavaria, and the dukes of Modena and Savoy, who were ready to change sides. And Spain was hardly an asset. She had neither fleet nor army. She had no money with which to help France, while French finances were in a parlous state, the royal plate having been melted to meet pressing needs.

While the nations were lining up, William died. The event was not unexpected. He had consulted the most eminent physicians of Europe, and, as Macaulay says, he wrote to them accounts of his symptoms under assumed names, thinking that their answers would thus be sincere. He had even appealed to Fagon, the adviser of the French king, describing himself as a parish priest. Fagon told him to prepare for death. The end came soon after his favourite horse Sorrel

stumbled on a molehill, and the enfeebled king fell off, breaking his collar-bone. This shock was too much for him, and after making arrangements for his succession, and preparations for the war, he died. His sister-in-law, Anne Stuart, a Protestant, though a daughter of James II, succeeded him, and England did not turn from her policy of reducing the power of the blatant Bourbon. Anne was completely dominated by Sarah, wife of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, whom William had appointed as commander of his forces in the United Provinces and as ambassador to the States-General. Marlborough was unreliable and unscrupulous, but he was a great general. He had learned the science of war from Turenne. At this time he was fifty-two years of age. By his side were Heinsius, the Grand Pensionary of Holland, a clever politician and a fine leader of men: and Prince Eugène, the son of the superb Olympe, whom we have already seen in action against Louis who had refused him a commission. These three—the triumvirate—were terrible enemies. Against them the French could not oppose men of like calibre. Louis himself was old, and in any event had never shone in the field. The poor Chamillard had upon his shoulders a double burden—a burden which had crushed Colbert and Louvois. His chief merits were those which he displayed on the billiard-table. He had also the recommendation of being complacent to Madame de

Maintenon. Villars was a capable soldier, a buffoon, braggart but brave, beloved by his men, given to drinking and to singing bouts; but he was not very popular at Versailles. There were Catinat and Boufflers. There was Vendôme—gay, licentious, a lover of Bacchus and of Venus—who had certainly won his spurs, and who deserved to be given a free hand. But Louis tried to direct them all from his cabinet, and obliged them to ask his permission before they undertook any action, with the result that by the time the couriers had been dispatched and had returned, the favourable opportunity had gone. There were the empty Villeroy, charmer of women, who affected a superior air, and knew how to shake his wig; the incompetent Marsin; and La Feuillade who owed his position to his having married a daughter of Chamillard.

Defeat was to be expected and it came quickly and crushingly. In Italy Catinat had to withdraw before the Prince Eugène. The Duc de Savoie was suspected of communications with Eugène, and soon afterwards the duke, though he was father-in-law of the Duc de Bourgogne and of the King of Spain, joined the coalition. Catinat was recalled, and the presumptuous Villeroy replaced him. He hoped to surprise Eugène at Chiari, but was himself surprised and beaten. He took up quarters at Cremona. There Eugène again surprised him and took him prisoner. Louis sent the Duc de Vendôme early in 1702 to replace

Villeroy in Italy, while Catinat and Villars went to the Rhine army, and the Duc de Bourgogne and the Maréchal de Boufflers arrived in Flanders.

King Philip, at the suggestion of Louis, proceeded in state to Italy. He was enthusiastically received at Naples—though this was by no means a proof of Neapolitan fidelity. He joined the Duc de Vendôme at Milan. Vendôme, the illegitimate grandson of Henri IV, had many qualities; he was fearless and his white plumes were reminiscent of his illustrious grandfather. But he had one defect; nothing could persuade him to get out of bed before the afternoon. He managed by his vigour on the battlefield, his courage, and his skill, to hold the imperialists in check. He delivered Mantua. He captured the enemy's baggage on the Po. But he could do no more.

Boufflers in Flanders had to retreat before Marlborough who advanced to Venloo and Liège; and in a brilliant campaign seized Cologne, Guelderland and Limbourg. It was for this campaign that Queen Anne accorded to Marlborough the title of Duke, with a pension of £5,000. On the Rhine Catinat was feeble. He was obliged to remain on the defensive before Landau, which capitulated to the imperialists. He was recalled to Paris and thus ended his military career. But Villars brilliantly attacked the Prince of Baden in the Black Forest, near Friedlingen, and was rewarded with the bâton of Marshal. Later, he joined

the Elector of Bavaria who had beaten the Austrians. He would have liked to march on to Vienna, and had this blow been struck France might have won the war. Unfortunately the elector would follow no consistent plan, and Villars found himself surrounded by an army superior in numbers. The victory of Hochstädt fell to his credit, but his position had grown difficult. No longer could he and the elector act together. At his own request he was recalled, and Marsin, his successor, profiting by the difficulties which Hungary was creating for the emperor, took Augsburg. He was soon to lose Germany.

Tallard retook Landau for the French. There was the usual ebb and flow of battle for several years. In the meantime civil war broke out. The Protestants in the Cévennes had not all been subdued. There remained, after the emigration and the imprisonments and the massacres, a body of Calvinists who were now led by two young chiefs almost children, Cavalier and Roland. They were called the camisards on account of the white shirts they wore. England and Savoy were only too willing to encourage the revolt, though they sent little help. The camisards had suffered terribly, and they avenged their sufferings cruelly. They attacked the convents and the churches. They descended on the Catholic villages. They burnt and pillaged. In reply, Montrevel and Basville undertook to suppress them, and adopted extraordinary measures.

Hundreds of villages were reduced to ashes. Thousands of deportations, in the most horrible conditions, were ordered. But the mountain folk, led by their pastors of the desert, were fanatical. They refused to be subdued. Villars was sent to the Cévennes, and he was both firm and conciliatory. He was pitiless and he was pacific. He treated with Cavalier, he restored peace, he helped to rebuild the villages, and he promised (though it was a promise he could not keep), that liberty of conscience should be respected.

The battle of Blenheim was fought in 1694. Marlborough and Eugène united their forces in Bavaria. They numbered fifty-two thousand men. Against them were Tallard and Marsin who had strong armies. But the generalship on the French side was poor. Marlborough had no difficulty in driving Tallard's troops to the river, and in taking its commander prisoner. Marsin, whose army was separated from that of Tallard, fled across the Danube. He left behind him, in the village of Blenheim, an army corps which could do nothing but surrender. It was computed that the French suffered twelve thousand casualties. Fourteen thousand prisoners were taken. The French cannon and the French standards fell into the Allied hands. Bavaria was overrun. The elector took refuge in Brussels. Austria was saved. The defeat was more discouraging than any that France had yet suffered. A whole army had been wiped out, and the

only ally of France was *hors de combat.* Germany was entirely evacuated by the French.

The French chagrin was unprecedented. Louis was profoundly wounded and humiliated. But he would not confess his trouble. He would not disgrace his generals. He went on as though nothing had happened. France would be attacked everywhere in the following year, and Louis called up all the resources of the country to resist the invasion.

Those resources seemed poor enough. French commerce was at a standstill; the industries which Colbert had done so much to encourage were ruined; fields were left unploughed. As La Bruyère wrote: "One sees certain wild animals, male and female, scattered over the countryside, black, livid, and burnt by the sun, attached to the soil that they dig and delve with invincible obstinacy. They have something like articulate voices, and when they stand on their feet they show human faces, and, in fact, they are men. They withdraw at night into lairs, where they live on black bread, water, and roots." The increase of taxation, the lodgment of troops, the exigencies of military service, were insupportable. Earlier Fénelon had written that France had become a great desolate hospital without provisions. Boisguillebert had put forward his celebrated economic proposals. One-tenth of the people were beggars, and half of those who were not beggars were on the border line of beggary.

The poor died wholesale: the population by the end of the reign had diminished by six millions.

And yet, though the policy of Louis was responsible for this distress, one cannot help admiring him more in his humiliation than in his triumphs. He did not indulge in vain complaints. He did not fall to scolding. When he had paid a large ransom for Villeroy, who had been prisoner in Cremona, and called into the armies of Flanders, and again Villeroy failed him, Louis shook his head sadly, and in a melancholy voice merely uttered this whimsical rebuke: "Monsieur le Maréchal, on n'est plus heureux à notre âge." At their age, king and marshal alike must expect reverses. They had had their day, and now everything was turning against them.

The Allies recognized the young Archduke Charles, second son of the Emperor Leopold, as King of Spain under the name of Charles III. Thereupon he went to Holland and to England, and embarked with an army for Portugal. The first attempt of the Archduke Charles was without success. He was repelled by the solid and serious Maréchal Berwick. But the English seized Gibraltar, which has remained in their hands ever since.

At the beginning of the campaign of 1702, Leopold died and his son Joseph succeeded him as emperor.

The Archduke Charles landed at Catalonia. Barce-

lona was taken by him. The neighbouring provinces accepted him as king. He pushed on to Madrid. Louis, seeing the cause of his grandson lost in Spain itself, began to contemplate the abandonment of Spain. He desired to send Philip to America to reign over Spanish territories there. Pope Clement XI, assuming the Allied cause to be won, wrote to Charles as "Our very dear son, King of the Spains."

The battle of Ramillies was particularly disastrous for France and Spain. Marlborough, operating in the Low Countries, had attacked Villeroy, who imprudently refused to await reinforcements. The Frenchman committed every mistake. His left wing was out of action, placed as it was behind marshland. His centre was composed of raw recruits. His baggage encumbered his lines. Marlborough fell upon these badly disposed troops, killed five thousand, captured fifteen thousand, took possession of the artillery and the provisions. The Low Countries were practically abandoned by the French. Marlborough held Antwerp, Brussels, and Ostend. Louis brought Vendôme from the army of Italy to Flanders. But this left Eugène and the Duc de Savoie comparatively free. The Duc d'Orléans was nominally in command in Italy, but the real generals were La Feuillade and Marsin, who were quite incapable. They failed to take Turin, a key town and Eugène crossed river after river and with inferior forces fell upon the French.

Marsin was killed, the Duc d'Orléans was wounded. It was necessary to abandon Italy as the Low Countries had been abandoned. Then the imperial armies advanced to Naples. Eugène entered Provence and besieged Toulon. This city, however, was well defended, and Eugène was obliged to retreat.

Eugène and Marlborough effected a junction in Flanders near Oudenarde. It seemed that France must now collapse. Louis's grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, with Vendôme as his second in command, tried to oppose the Allies. They were defeated for they were divided in their counsels. The blame must doubtless fall on the young prince, for he was utterly unfitted for warfare. He was thinking more of the Kingdom of Heaven than the Kingdom of France. He had developed a sweet piety, and was surrounded by the religiously-minded persons of the court, who formed what has been called the Government of Saints. In the field he was listless and distracted, and was a check upon the blustering Vendôme.

Marlborough advanced into France. He invested Lille, which was defended by Boufflers: it was compelled to capitulate. France trembled, for there was nothing to stop the Allies from marching to Paris. In point of fact, a few of the Dutch got as far as Versailles, and took prisoner a man whom they mistook for the dauphin.

The winter of 1709 was one of the most rigorous

that had ever been known. Nature itself joined hands with the Allies to reduce France. Olive trees, vines, fruit trees, and wheat perished. Famine stalked abroad. There were popular movements of revolt, but they were not dangerous for they were the revolt of skeletons. What was the attitude of Louis? He was profoundly humble. His grandeur had gone. No longer could he maintain his haughty demeanour. The judgment of God was upon him. The old man, in his Palace of Versailles, eating oat bread, looking dolefully upon his aged partner, who under her wrappings shivered with cold, decided that it was useless to oppose destiny. He was being punished for his faults. Had he not greatly sinned? Was it not right that he should suffer? Broken and penitent, he who had loved war too well, now sincerely wished for peace. He announced that he would make sacrifices. The English and the Dutch might have granted peace, but the emperor was implacable. Torcy, disguised, went to the Hague, and, in the name of the king who was yesterday master of Europe, consented to the demolition of Dunkirk, the surrender of Lille and of Strasbourg, the cession of Newfoundland. France would recognize Charles III as King of Spain. The emperor demanded still more. He demanded that Louis should turn against his own offspring and chase Philip V, on behalf of the Allies, from Spain.

Louis, in the depths of despair, was aroused at this

final and inhuman condition. He would cease to support Philip, but he would not fight against him. If there was to be war, it should be against his enemies, not against his children. The negotiations were broken off, and Louis addressed himself directly to his people. He wrote to his intendants and bishops a letter, which was published, asking the people to judge between him and his enemies. "I am persuaded that my people will not receive peace in conditions that are contrary to justice and honour." His appeal to patriotism was effective. The people, exhausted, famished, leaped to arms. In all the kingdom there was but a single cry of indignation. The desire for vengeance was in every heart. Never are the French to be feared so much as when they are apparently defeated. Recruits came from everywhere. On the morning of Malplaquet, bread was distributed to the army of skeletons. The battle-cry sounded, and the famished soldiers threw away their bread and ran into battle. Patriotism! Therein lies the strength of the French. It has been proved over and over again that if this chord can be touched the French are unconquerable. They have fought with varying success outside France, but outside France, in spite of Louis and Napoleon, they will sooner or later falter. Inside France, woe betide the enemy that thinks the French are beaten! They cannot be beaten on their own soil. Like Antæus, who was invincible so long as he re-

mained in contact with his mother earth, so are the French truly indomitable when they are fighting to preserve France. Hercules discovered the source of the strength of Antæus, lifted him from the earth, and crushed him in the air. So may France be crushed when she goes abroad in quest of conquests. Herein lay the mistake of Louis and Napoleon.

The battle of Malplaquet was bloody indeed. It was lost by France but it was a glorious defeat; and it marked the turn of the tide. Villars and Boufflers had an army inferior in numbers to the army of Marlborough and Eugène; and that army was largely made up of raw recruits, of men exhausted by fatigue and hunger. But these men were desperate. They fought with resolute courage. Almost did they win on the right, but on the left Marlborough drove them back. At this moment Villars was badly wounded and he was carried to Quesnoy. The French entrenchments were swept away. Boufflers decided on retreat and fell back on Valenciennes and Quesnoy. What a wonderful retreat! His army of famished men kept perfect order. They lost no prisoners, they lost no flags. The Allies did not know whether they had won or lost. They counted twenty-two thousand of their men killed, while the French counted only eight thousand. Villars, from his bed, counselled a fresh engagement, but Louis would not consent. The enemy took Mons

after a siege, and then the armies settled in their winter quarters.

Louis again offered peace. But the Allies insisted that he should march against Philip. Again the nation supported the king. Villars was for taking the offensive, but Louis again advised prudence.

The French remained on the defensive. Town after town resisted finely, and enfeebled the Allies. The French army was reorganized. It had three commanders—Villars, Berwick, and Montesquiou. Step by step it would oppose the advance.

In Spain Philip was once more vanquished, and he abandoned Madrid for the second time. Charles arrived with an army of English and Portuguese, and made his entry with military pomp. But he had entered a dead city. The shops were closed, the windows were shuttered. Such inhabitants as he encountered remained silent. The Spanish had espoused the cause of Philip, and would not have Charles imposed upon them. Philip was their legitimate king. Charles was only a Catholic king by the grace of the Protestants. Now came into Spain the Duc de Vendôme; and he rallied an army of volunteers. Guerilla warfare was organized. Charles repented of having ventured into the midst of a hostile population. His lines of communication were cut. He was king only of the ground on which he stood. Vendôme soon forced him to leave Madrid, and at Villaviciosa routed the

Allies. The presence of Philip was an inspiration; but Philip was weary. "I will give you," said Vendôme, "the finest bed on which monarch ever lay"; and he made him a bed of flags captured from the enemy.

It was England who had led the Allies. But England was losing patience. The Whigs were partisans of the war, but the Tories clamoured for peace. Anne escaped from the clutches of Sarah Churchill. Steadily the Tories gained, until Queen Anne was compelled to call them to power. Marlborough, who had enriched himself enormously in these campaigns, owed his influence to the Whigs, and with the coming of the Tories he was recalled.

In April 1711, the Emperor Joseph died. His successor was Charles, the pretender to the throne of Spain. Charles immediately united the arms of Austria and of Castile. This was the reconstruction of the dreaded monarchy of Charles-Quint. Like his illustrious predecessor he regarded himself as the possessor of the German states, of the Italian states, of Spain and her dominions. Now it was obviously absurd to support him in these claims, when the alliance had been formed for the special purpose of preventing the establishment of a dual monarchy. The Allies had feared that the Bourbons would have unlimited control of Europe. They were not disposed to give unlimited control to the Hapsburgs. It was to

prevent a universal monarchy that the war had been undertaken. It could not be continued with the object of assisting in the creation of a universal monarchy. From the English and the Dutch point of view it was better to recognize Philip V, if France and Spain would agree not to unite. So, amid domestic bereavements, Louis seized his opportunity of making peace. Queen Anne favourably received the propositions of France; and towards the end of 1711 preliminaries of peace were signed in London. Anne recognized the succession of Philip, provided he renounced Italy and the Low Countries, and gave guaranties against the union of France and Spain. The other allies, and especially the emperor, considered the British defection as a treason. Prince Eugène went to London to represent the emperor. But Marlborough was now in disgrace, and the House of Commons was irritated against the Allies. Eugène could obtain nothing, and, on January 29, a Congress opened at Utrecht. There were present the ministers of France, England, Holland, and Savoy. The emperor would send no minister; but he was soon to see that he could not face even a humiliated France singlehanded.

Eugène, on his behalf, made the attempt. He took Quesnoy and he besieged Landrecies. The position was still disquieting. Louis was advised to retire to Blois, since the road to Paris was open to the prince. But Louis, now seventy-four years of age, wrote to

Villars that he entrusted him with his troops: if they were unfortunate he would personally go to Péronne or Saint-Quentin, rally the remnants of his army, lead them to battle, destroy the enemy or bury himself under the ruins of his throne. In his old age Louis really rose to the height of his greatness. But Villars with inferior troops attacked Eugène. He captured the post of Denain. Other positions along the Scarpe were carried. Landrecies was relieved. Douai, Quesnoy, Bouchain were retaken. France was able to go into the peace conference with her head high.

There were three treaties—that of Utrecht (April 1713) between France, Spain, England, Holland, Savoy, and Portugal; that of Rastadt (March 1714) between France and the emperor; that of Baden (June 1714) between France and the Empire. Between the first and the two latter treaties Villars again discomfited Eugène. The general effect of these treaties was to preserve for France her earlier conquests—Alsace, Artois, Ioussillon, Flanders, Franche-Comté, Strasbourg, Sarrelouis, Landau, and some of the colonies such as the Antilles and Senegal. With the Duc de Savoie there was an exchange of territories. To England went Newfoundland, and Dunkirk was dismantled. The Protestant Elector of Hanover, George I, was recognized as the heir of Queen Anne; and the Pretender to the English throne, James Edward, was sent from France. Those who had

been imprisoned on religious grounds were released. Gibraltar and Minorca went to England; Sicily went to Savoy; the Low Countries, Milan, Naples, and Sardinia went to the emperor. The Bavarian elector regained possession of his lands. These and a number of other provisions were not unfavourable to France, especially if one considers the original demands of the Allies. The loss of the Netherlands by the Spaniards was perhaps an advantage, for it removed a constant cause of strife between France and Spain. England emerged as the greatest power on the seas. But most significant of all was the recognition of the Kingdom of Prussia. That promotion of the Elector of Brandenburg marks the beginning of another duel in Europe—the duel between France and modern Germany.

Chapter Twenty-two

A SAD SUN-SETTING

IF LOUIS was the Roi-Soleil, his latter years were those of a sad sun-setting. Indeed, after the Treaty of Nimwegen, when he was given the title of Great by the magistrates of Paris, there is little that redounds to his glory, military or diplomatic, financial or administrative. He was provocative in the few years of peace that preceded the war of the League of Augsburg, and even insolent. But his misfortunes truly began to fall upon him after the death of Colbert in 1683. In 1685 came the two gigantic blunders which marked the decline: his marriage with Madame de Maintenon and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Afterwards nothing went well. The Revocation directly led to the disastrous war of 1688 to 1697. At the Treaty of Ryswick, in 1697, France was staggering to ruin. Yet three years later there began another war which was to last for thirteen years —to the very close of Louis's reign—a war for the placing of a French prince on the throne of Spain; though, as might have been expected, when the

French prince had established himself securely, he became as Spanish as any Spaniard. We have followed the main threads of this war which left France weary and woe-begone. But we have omitted to record the personal bereavements of the old disappointed man, who had so badly guided France and had prepared for himself years of unhappiness. Just as he wore high heels to increase his stature, so he mounted on the stilts of militarism and of magnificence to conceal his moral dwarfishness. But they were in the end knocked from under him; and he could only sit facing Madame de Maintenon, mourning over past glories, and the disappearance of his children and grandchildren. When things were at their worst he became simple and human. But when peace returned he was (as Fénelon wrote) humiliated without humility. He again became hard and haughty, insensible to sufferings. He could not listen to those who warned him of the miseries of his kingdom. He persecuted as before, though persecutions were the chief cause of his downfall. He gave to his bastards the rank of crown princes, thus seriously undermining the monarchial principle, which must be above the will of the monarch, though from it the monarch derives his power to do anything except change the principle of monarchy.

In 1711, when the king had reached his seventy-third year, the political sky, which had been black,

began to lighten; but as Louis ventured to cherish the hope that something might be retrieved from the wreck, the dauphin died. The dauphin was his only son—that is to say, by the queen. Monseigneur was fifty years of age. He was corpulent, featureless, lazy, haughty, trivial. He was silent to an incredible degree, and is only known to have spoken on affairs of state to Mademoiselle Choin, his mistress, a good but unintelligent person, once in his life. With his subordinates he was excessively familiar; he liked the society of valets, and he is supposed, imitating his father, to have secretly married his mistress.

Monseigneur was on indifferent terms with the king. When he was stricken with smallpox, Louis was not informed of the gravity of the case until the evening. But the next day he went to Meudon, and remained there until the end. When the dauphin was dying, Louis was at table, and Dr. Fagon refused to acquaint him with the condition of his son "lest he should lose his appetite." When at last he was informed he fell on a couch and remained there in a state of prostration. Madame de Maintenon sat on the same couch, doing her best to weep. As soon as the king was carried away from Meudon there was a general exodus. Courtiers and servants fled from the masterless mansion.

Monseigneur left three sons, Louis, Duc de Bourgogne, who had married the little Princess of Savoie,

Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, who was now King of Spain, and Charles, Duc de Berri. The Duc de Bourgogne became dauphin. High hopes were set upon the pupil of Fénelon. His wife was beloved by everybody: her girlish laughter sounded strange in that gloomy court. In less than a year she, too, was dead. So sudden was this unexpected blow that it was rumoured there was foul play. But this was a common charge, and the idle supposition founded upon a present of snuff from Spain, does not bear examination. The dauphin, the Duc de Bourgogne, was immediately stricken with the same mysterious malady, and he died six days later.

The Duc de Bourgogne was an ugly little man with a long pointed chin, an extraordinarily long nose, protruding teeth, hunchbacked, lobsided, and lame. In his youth he had been given to sudden rages: he was voluptuous and cruel by nature; but the admonitions of Fénelon accomplished a miracle, and made of this unpromising prince a good-tempered, affable, well-instructed young man, deeply devout, with advanced views: a puppet in the hands of the religious cabal. He profited by the curious teachings of Fénelon so much that he actually wrote the following maxims, astonishing for the age: "Kings are made for their subjects, and not their subjects for Kings. . . . Kings must punish with justice, because they are guardians of the law; they must award recompenses because they are debts, but never presents, because, having nothing

of their own, they can only give presents at the expense of the people."

The Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne left two children—the Duc de Bretagne, five years old, and the Duc d'Anjou, still a sucking child. Nevertheless that little sucking child, the last of his race, whose cradle was placed beside so many coffins, that frail little creature was to be the last hope of Louis. The title of Dauphin appeared to bring ill-luck. A few days later the new dauphin, the Duc de Bretagne, also died. Was it possible that all these deaths were natural? Alternately it was stated that the princes and princesses had been poisoned—or that they had been stricken by the hand of God. In any case, the death of three dauphins was a punishment for the misdeeds of the monarchy. The Duc d'Orléans, nephew of the king (a few years later to be regent), was openly accused of murder. In his palace he heard the cries of the people. When he went abroad he was insulted. When he visited the court everyone avoided him. His licentious conduct, his irreligious principles, seemed to give some substance to these suspicions. Louis himself was shaken, but he could take no action. The duke went to the king. He appealed for an inquiry. Louis remained silent. The duke repeated his proposition. "I do not want scandal," said Louis, "and I forbid you to make any." "But if I go voluntarily to the Bastille," asked the duke, "will you not accord me

the grace of having me judged?" "If you go to the Bastille," replied the king, "I will leave you there." "Then at least," insisted the duke, "have Humbert arrested." Humbert was a chemist with whom the duke had studied and who was said to have furnished the poisons. Nothing was done, and the suspicions were doubtless unjust. The illegitimate Duc du Maine, overweeningly ambitious, had set these rumours into circulation, in the hope of replacing the Orléans family should the last of the direct heirs die.

In the direct line there only remained the infant Duc d'Anjou. King Philip of Spain, the second son of the Grand Dauphin, was barred from the throne of France. There was also Charles, Duc de Berri, the third son of the Grand Dauphin; but he died in 1714. Only a little sickly infant between the Duc d'Orléans and the throne! Was it not to the advantage of Orléans that the Bourbon branch should wither? But it was also to the advantage of the Duc du Maine.

The Duc de Berri was an amiable but an ignorant prince. He was afraid of making foolish remarks and so was always silent in company. He had married a daughter of the Duc d'Orléans. Louis was deeply depressed. He felt that his own end was approaching, and he could not bear that it should be further saddened by the sight of mourning costumes. Orders were accordingly given that mourning was not to be

worn at Versailles. Louis became, to employ the word of Madame de Maintenon, "the most *inamusable* man in France." Broken and morose, he even abandoned the etiquette on which he had always insisted. He rose late, he received and ate in bed. When he was dressed he remained for hours in his great armchair, padded with velvet cushions. Though he was warned that he must take exercise, it was difficult to induce him to go into the open air that he had always loved. Sometimes he was pulled in a little chair around the magnificent gardens of Versailles; but even on those gardens had fallen sadness and solitude.

The court was divided into two parties. On one side were the princes of the blood—the Duc d'Orléans, the Condés, the Contis, the young nobles of ancient and legitimate race. On the other side were the bastard princes—the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse. They had, it is true, been legitimatized, and though they had against them all the old aristocracy, they had for them Madame de Maintenon, who hoped that she too would be "legitimatized" and be recognized as Queen of France. It was this second party which launched the poisoning charges against the Duc d'Orléans. Though the king rejected the charges, he decided to raise the illegitimate princes to the rank of princes of the blood. He had already given them the name of Bourbon, though they were born during the lifetime of the husband of

Madame de Montespan and during the lifetime of the queen and were therefore the offspring of a double adultery. He had already accorded to them precedence over all but the princes of the royal blood. Now, in August 1714, he gave them the right to succeed to the crown, after the last of the legitimate princes; and in May 1715, he published a declaration placing them on precisely the same footing as the princes of royal blood. He was alarmed himself at his temerity. One day he said to them: "I have done for you not only what I could do, but what I could not do. It is for you to justify my decision by your merit." They were sensible of the honour they had extracted from the old king, but were equally sensible of the danger. When they were complimented by the courtiers, the Comte de Toulouse, who was not without good qualities, remarked, "It is very fine, provided it lasts and gives us a single additional friend." One bold courtier observed: "Monseigneur, here is a crown of roses that may become a crown of thorns when the flowers have fallen." There were indignant protests. D'Agues-seau proclaimed that the edict was contrary to law, and that Parliament had dishonoured itself in registering it. Pontchartrain, who was Chancellor, resigned, saying that the king had no right to dispose of the crown: he was prepared to sacrifice his life to his king but not his honour.

The Duc du Maine, the favourite of the king and

of Madame de Maintenon, already enjoyed sovereign powers. His ambition was at least to become regent. The new Chancellor Voisin, a creature of Madame de Maintenon, undertook the ungrateful task of urging Louis to make a testament in favour of the Duc du Maine instead of the Duc d'Orléans. But Louis realized his situation. He who had been all powerful, who had been the Sun-King, who had been the Sun-God, could not govern after his death. "The birth of the Duc d'Orléans," he said, "calls him to the regency, and I would not have my testament disregarded as was that of my father. While we are living we can do what we please. But after our death we are less than the least of our subjects."

But while he was living there was little he could now do. He was abandoned. He was left without distractions to the sadness of old age. If he commanded that his children should remain with him, they merely sulked. There was no conversation. His days were sombre and his nights were lonely. At last he consented to make his testament. When he handed it to the Premier President of Parliament, he spoke so dolefully that the magistrate came away sorrowful. Madame de Maintenon and the legitimatized Princes, believing that they had triumphed, now arranged some diversions. They were of no avail. Louis grew steadily worse. His physician did not disguise the truth. Louis assembled his officers by his bedside.

"Messieurs," he said, "you have served me faithfully. I regret that I have not recompensed you better. I leave you with sorrow. Serve the Dauphin with the same affection. He is a child of five years, who may experience many difficulties, for I remember that I had many in my youth. Follow the orders that my nephew [the Duc d'Orléans] will give you, for it is he who will govern the Kingdom. I feel that I am becoming sentimental, and you too; I ask your pardon. Adieu, Messieurs. I trust that you will remember me sometimes." The Dauphin was brought into the room by the Duchesse de Ventadour. "My child," he said, "you will be a great King. Do not imitate me in my love of buildings nor in my love of war. Try, on the contrary, to keep the peace with your neighbours. Render to God that which you owe Him. Follow good counsels. Endeavour to make your people happy as I have been unable to do." To his domestics who wept, he said: "Did you then think that I was immortal? For myself I have never thought so." To Madame de Maintenon, who had sat by his bedside in prayer, he said: "Madame, what consoles me in dying is that we shall soon be reunited." She was three years older than the king. She rose angrily and left the room, murmuring: "What a rendezvous to give me! That man has never loved anybody but himself." As soon as she could escape she went to her convent at Saint-Cyr. Louis died on

September 8, 1715, at the age of seventy-seven, after a reign of seventy-two years.

The news of his death was received with pleasure by the people. The court plainly showed its delight. The city indulged in unseemly mirth. Voltaire recalls that he saw tents set upon the road to Saint-Denis, along which the coffin of the king was to pass, in which people were drinking, singing, and laughing. The opinion was expressed that it would be a fitting revenge to fire the house of the Jesuits with the funeral torches of the king. Thus more than sixty years before the Revolution the people marked their abhorrence of absolute monarchy and of religious tyranny. The will of Louis was, of course, set aside. France had already shown its contempt for posthumous despotism. The Duc d'Orléans appealed to Parliament, and the words of Louis as he was dying were quoted in his favour. The regency was given to the duke with authority to constitute the council as he wished; and the Duc du Maine, who by the testament had been placed in supreme power, was sent away by Parliament, a disappointed and detested man. Even the command of the royal household was denied to the Duc du Maine.

Louis's reign presents three epochs: his infancy, his maturity, his old age. The dawn of the Sun-King was obscured by the troubles of the Fronde, and sombre clouds covered its decline. In the first period

Louis remained in the background, without clear personality, dull, oppressed. In the second period he suddenly developed an energy which struck everybody with astonishment and admiration. There was, indeed, majesty in his demeanour. The metamorphosis was startling. It seems to me that the true explanation lies in his consciousness of his deficiencies. Those who represent him as completely self-satisfied at the death of Mazarin accuse him of unparalleled stupidity. Such incredible complacency as Louis showed on all public occasions is evidence either of half-wittedness or of a supreme resolve to surmount the defaults of an ignorant and neglected youth of which he was ashamed. Certainly he was not half-witted; he was not very intelligent, and his reign is strewn with blunders of every kind, which it is pure sophistry to convert into the aberrations of genius; but though he was not over-intelligent he possessed something like a normal intellect. His blunders are often the blunders of mediocrity. But they are sometimes more. They are the blunders of a man who is haunted by a sense of his own inferiority. They indicate Louis's attempt to surpass himself. Occasionally his follies turn to his advantage, as follies may well do. His audacity was so amazing that it succeeded. Yet folly, whether it arises from inability to calculate the effects of one's deeds, or is the product of a fear of falling below what is expected by the world, is always fol-

lowed by its Nemesis; and in the case of Louis his follies brought sufferings of the most terrible kind on himself and on France.

There are many instances of despised persons suddenly exaggerating their importance and taking up attitudes that are grotesque. Every reader of biographies must have felt that this sense of smallness is at the bottom of a good deal of apparent greatness. True greatness is simple and natural. False greatness is not so much fatuity as a reaction against weakness. Louis was taught that he was nothing; whatever may have been the flattery of his preceptors, it was counteracted by the realities of the court under Mazarin. From this lowly situation he was in a moment lifted to the loftiest pedestal in Europe. He might have behaved in one of two ways. He might have shrunk from the task of imposing himself, have placed himself helplessly in the hands of new masters, and have welcomed dependency for the rest of his life. Or he might—and this is what he did—have determined to be more independent than the ordinary king who is carefully prepared for his functions. The ordinary king carefully prepared for his functions would, at the age of twenty-two, have welcomed advisers. He would have realized that he could not rule alone. But Louis would have been altogether lost if he had admitted that he could not rule alone. He could keep his rank only by excessive domination; and by laying

down that the wisest counsellors, with the richest experience, could not be accepted as on the level of Louis. We would laugh at his presumption, the presumption of a callow uninstructed youth, a presumption which absolutely nothing could possibly justify, were we not aware that such presumption is a manifestation of the instinct of self-preservation. Louis had to be the highest—or the lowest. For him there was no middle course. It was a perilous decision which he took. But it was for him the only decision. He had to accept the risks or lose his self-esteem.

His pride, in its origins, was then founded on his humiliations. Yet that pride which compelled him to tower over his ministers and challenge Europe led to such successes that hereafter he cultivated it as an indispensable method of government. It was a weapon that he could not throw away. Instead of breaking, it hardened in his hands. His courtiers did not smile at his pretensions. They assured him that he was right. The more preposterous were his claims, the more did they bend their knees before him. A perpetual odour of incense was sent up to his nostrils. Had he been more intelligent he would have been abashed by the absurdity of the adulation. As it was he was confirmed in his conduct, and redeemed in his own eyes. He almost persuaded himself that he was a demi-god if not a god. The ballet of Benserade informed him that no Daphne could fly from him,

no Phaëthon could drive his chariot across the heavens for a single day. The armour of pride which he had put on grew to be an inseparable part of himself. Saint-Simon perspicaciously says that the court saw that he had a foible, rather than a taste, for glory. Everybody praised him and spoilt him. Finally flattery became necessary to his existence. It was only by flattery that one could approach him. There was no need to take precautions. Laudations could not be pitched in too lofty a key. Louis had no voice and knew no music, yet he sang the operatic airs which recounted his splendour. He had no knowledge and no talent for diplomacy, yet he posed as a diplomatist. He had no ability as a soldier, yet he considered himself the foremost general of his age. He came to believe the legend he had created for his own comfort. It was this pride, sustained by flattery, which caused him to destroy Fouquet, to hate Colbert (whom he could not, however, dismiss), to rejoice in the death of Louvois (of whom, however, he was afraid), and to prefer to have only nincompoops around him.

There was a constant decline in the quality of his ministers until we arrive at the Chamillars and the Voisins. Condé and Turenne were not the generals he liked—or even Villars and Vendôme. Incompetent army chiefs like Villeroy, Tallard, and Marsin suited him better; for he could send to them from Versailles plans of campaign, leave the ignominy of their

defeats to them, and claim their victories for himself. Monsieur, his brother, he detested because he beat William of Orange and took Cassel; and once he had given these proofs of his capacity Monsieur was never again allowed to command an army. Louis boasted of having furnished Molière with the principal scenes of *Tartufe*, forgetting that he prevented the production of the piece for five years. Corneille was anathema to him, because Corneille remained a *frondeur*. Racine found favour in his eyes, because Racine received his counsels. To Le Brun he gave subjects for painting, and to Mansart and to Le Nôtre designs. In his choice of residences he displayed his character; the splendid Louvre with its magnificent history, Saint-Germain whose old château was built by Charles V, and whose new château was built by Henri IV, he abandoned for Versailles, which he had himself built, which began with him and would be empty without him. The great men of his age were only acknowledged by him if they consented to serve as his high heels and lofty perukes. He did not lend them light —they were only tolerated if they lent him light: Louis, after all, was a reflector and not a sun.

Jealous as he was of the interventions of his most distinguished subjects in the government of the state, he was in fact constantly influenced by those who knew how to manage him. His ministers when they were both skilful and artful largely controlled him.

Out of twenty projects he would accept nineteen, rejecting one to demonstrate his superior judgment. Colbert had to trick him into the belief that Louis was the true author of reforms; but Louvois had an easier task in stirring his military vanity and pushing him into war. Marie Mancini, Louise de La Vallière, Madame de Montespan, and Madame de Maintenon all had an extraordinary influence over him for a longer or shorter time, and often their influence was disastrous. It is contrary to all the facts to pretend that they were not allowed to interfere in state affairs. When they had obtained an ascendancy over him the real weakness of Louis became apparent. He was the slave of his mistresses, who clung to him, as he clung to them, long after his passion had subsided. Madame de Montespan bullied him disgracefully, while Madame de Maintenon in her colder manner intimidated him. For his women he built Versailles. For them he went to war. For them he signed the fatal Revocation. For them he behaved scandalously in legitimatizing his children, and afterwards in placing them on an equal footing with the royal princes. "Ma tante," asked the gay Duchesse de Bourgogne, "why do the Queens in England govern better than the Kings?"—and Madame de Maintenon remaining silent, she answered: "Because under Kings the women rule, and under Queens the men."

One's sympathy goes out to the poor old man, lonely

and unhappy. Saint-Simon, who is not always just towards the king, is deeply moving in his account of the misfortunes of the latter days. They rendered, he says, a service to his renown, greater than the brilliance of his conquests, and the circumstances of his prosperity. The grandeur of soul that he showed constantly in his reverses, amid domestic upheavals, touches us. He was deserted on all sides. His enemies rejoiced in his impotence and insulted him. He was without the help of efficient servants whom, in his pride, he had tried to form himself. Nobody consoled him. He had never sought affection: he wished to make himself feared: he had become a monster of egotism, *un maniaque du moi.* Those to whom he might properly have expected to turn for aid now abused him. They were his jailers. He did not complain. He showed a new patience and a new courage. "These things might have won for him the name of Grand which had been prematurely accorded. These things obtained for him the veritable admiration of Europe and those of his subjects who witnessed them; they brought back to him many hearts that a reign so long and so hard had alienated. He knew how to bow under the hand of God, recognizing His justice, imploring His mercy, without depreciating in the eyes of men his person and his Crown."

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